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THE
WAR WITH MEXICO.

BY R. S. RIPLEY,

BREVET MAJOR IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, FIRST LIEUTENANT OF THE
SECOND REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY, ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
82 CLIFF STREET.

1849.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand
eight hundred and forty-nine, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District
of New York.

P R E F A C E.

A PERIOD of more than thirty years of peaceful intercourse with the great nations of the earth had left the recent history of the United States without any great events of a military character at the commencement of the war with Mexico. The government of the republic commenced and prosecuted the war, having had little experience in extended military operations, and being at the outset in a measure unprepared. In spite of those difficulties, however, but little more than two years was required to bring it to a termination, and during that period American arms suffered no reverse.

The novelty and importance of the struggle caused it to be regarded as the matter of chief interest during its continuance, and that which was felt in it by the American people was in no ways lessened by the glorious achievements of the army. The many modern facilities for extending information were all employed to set forth the different events as fast as they occurred, and the accounts were published with a rapidity and a redundancy almost unexampled. Various writers followed the march of the American army, and wrote lengthy

epistles on the operations for the columns of newspapers at home. Others, remaining in the United States, employed themselves from the first in collecting and embodying the material into the form of extended narratives. Many of them have been published; some for political effect, some for the purpose of making a ready sale during the first enthusiasm of the public, and some, perhaps, with the intention of giving a true record of the events of the war.

With all of these before the public at the time, it may be deemed that the subject has been exhausted for the present, and that another work is unnecessary. It can not be that the great end of history can be injuriously affected by too great a number of works upon the subject, if they are all written with a correct intention, and with truth continually in view. It may well be a difficult thing for a writer to keep in the strait and narrow path when variety of information, national pride, interest, and inclination, all tend to induce him to chronicle those events which redound most to the honor of his own country, and to perpetuate the belief in the infallibility of the military and political measures by which a great and glorious success has been achieved. Without reference to the many providential or fortunate circumstances which may have assisted in bringing about the result, it is perhaps too generally believed, as a matter of course, that the end has been obtained principally by the exercise of skill or sagacity on the

part of one or a few. Such is the popular belief soon after every military achievement, and for the reason that it requires time and reflection to perceive the effect which various fortuitous circumstances may have exercised upon the course of events.

But it will not do to base future action upon the results of experience, unless, indeed, the part which fortune has borne has been fairly considered, and it therefore becomes more than ever important that the record should be exact ; for the continuance of peace is always uncertain, and governments and people are prone to adopt one course of policy in wars, to a certain degree, regardless of the diverse nature of their enemies. Different views of military matters, which may very truly and properly be taken by writers viewing them from different points, may assist in developing the truth. Certainly many written with good intention are required, when some are erroneous on account of inaccuracies purposely set forth for the furtherance of partial interests.

The present work has been mainly prepared during a period of respite from ordinary professional duties. It is feared that the time has been too short for the undertaking, in consideration of its magnitude and the importance of the subject, but the time at my disposal has nearly expired, and it must be presented as it is.

It has been my intention to give a general and impartial account of those events which, for a few

past years, have been of absorbing interest, and which must necessarily be looked upon in future years as the most prominent of any which have occurred since the independence of the country.

My aim has been to be impartial, and to present the different occurrences in their true light, stripped of the show and ornament which have been hung upon them in the exultation of the moment, and for the undue gratification of national or personal pride. It would be claiming more than any man has a right to claim to say that I had been fully successful; but, having had several advantages in the collection of material, and having undertaken the work with the end in view, I have felt some confidence that, in the respect of impartiality, it may not be without merit. A personal observation of the country on both of the principal routes of operation, an intimate acquaintance with many American officers, and some intercourse with those of the Mexican army, were among those advantages. The various official publications of the different governments have afforded the correspondence and reports of the different civil and military functionaries, and other documents, except those of a nature of the papers appended to the work.

In the narrative of facts, the official papers have been referred to and followed, except where they contained known and obvious errors. The observations upon the different events of the war have been made with reference to the simplest and approved maxims of great military men, and where,

on account of the novel nature of the operations, they would not apply, I have tried to be guided by the dictates of reason. The observations, however, must be considered as being more exclusively my own; and that they should not interfere with the narrative, they have generally been inserted after that of the events to which they refer. They may, and probably will be at variance with the opinions of many officers of the American army; but as they appeared to me to be correct, I have thought proper to insert them, and to trust to the accompanying arguments for their support.

I would gladly have endeavored to make the account more thoroughly minute and circumstantial, that the deeds of very many brave officers and soldiers might be well known and understood. In military affairs especially, those in high position are the principal objects of regard either for approbation or condemnation, while the efforts and actions of those of subordinate rank, no less distinguished by the characteristics of good or evil, are unknown, except to a small circle of those intimately acquainted with the facts. But to present the acts of individuals would be a greater task than the space or time of the present work will allow, and, moreover, would increase the chances of doing injustice to few or many.

I.—B



CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction—Sketch of Mexican History in the early Periods of Independence—Settlement of Texas—Texan War—Treaty with Santa Anna—Recognition of Texan Independence by the United States and other Powers—Mexican Action upon the Treaty—Public Sentiment in the United States—Mexican Outrages on American Property—American Action as recommended by Jackson—Suspension of diplomatic Intercourse—Action of American Government on Recognition of Texan Independence—Resumption of diplomatic Intercourse with Mexico, and partial Adjustment of Claims—French Claims, and Attack on San Juan d'Ulloa—Mexican Claim of Sovereignty in Texas—Correspondence on Interference of American Citizens—On Annexation—Negotiations for Annexation—Conclusion of Treaty—Is rejected—Mexican Action—Public Sentiment in United States—Election of American President—American Action on Annexation—British and French Policy—Passage of Joint Resolution for Annexation—Efforts of British and French Agents to defeat the Measure—Mexican Acknowledgment of Texan Independence—Rejected—Movement of American Troops into Texas—Location of Troops—State of Mexico—Downfall of Santa Anna—Herrera's Administration—Mexican Action on Annexation—Informal Proposition to United States—Mission of Slidell—Disturbance in Mexico—Failure of Negotiations—Paredes's Pronunciamiento—Fall of Herrera—Administration of Paredes—Return of Slidell—Motives of Paredes—Review—Monarchical Scheme—Almonte's Intrigues with Abolitionists—Paredes's Order to Arista to commence the War—Public Sentiment in the United States—March of the American Army to Matamoras—Views of Secretary Marcy—of General Taylor—Commencement of Hostilities—General Review—Military State of Mexico—Origin of her Army—Nature of the People for military Service—Mexican Army—Resources—Military Policy of the United States—American Army—Volunteers—Marine—Resources Page 25

CHAPTER II.

Movement from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande—Passage of the Colorado—Arrival of American Army opposite Matamoras—Interview between Generals Worth and La Vega—Mexican Action—Commencement of Fortifica-

tions—Arrival of General Ampudia—Correspondence with General Taylor—Blockade of the Mouth of the Rio Grande—Arrival of General Arista—Commencement of Hostilities—Capture of Thornton's Squadron—Call for Volunteers—March to Point Isabel—Mexican Passage of the Rio Grande—Bombardment of Fort Brown—Battle of Palo Alto—Battle of Resaca de la Palma—Expedition against Burita—American Passage of the Rio Grande—Observations.....	Page 100
--	----------

CHAPTER III.

American Preparation for War—Difficulties of Executive—Avowed Object of War—California—New Mexico—Plan of Operations—General Gaines's Action at New Orleans—Term of Service of Volunteers—General Scott's Dispute with the War Department—General Taylor assigned to Command—Mr. Marcy's and General Scott's Letters to him on the Plan of Operations—General Taylor's Reply—Mr. Marcy's on the same Subject—General Taylor's Answer—Want of settled Plan of Operations—Observations—Difficulties in preparing Advance from Matamoras—Occupation of Reynosa and Camargo—Arrival of Twelve Months' Volunteers, and Discharge of Louisiana Troops—Preparations for Movement—Organization of Regulars—Worth marches to Serralvo—Establishment of Entrepôt—Organization of Field Division of Volunteers—Concentration of active Force at Serralvo—March toward Monterey.....	142
--	-----

CHAPTER IV.

Delays in Mexican Preparation—Intrigues of the Santanistas—Action of Santa Anna—His Plan for a Pronunciamiento—Immediate Effect—Action of the American Government—Efforts of Paredes to retain Power—His Difficulties—Revolution of August, 1846—Downfall of Paredes—Return of Santa Anna—His Manifesto, August the 16th—Action of the Mexican Government under Salas—Attempted Issue of Prize Letters—American Offer of Negotiations—Arrival of Santa Anna at the Capital—Measures of the Mexican Government—Preparation at Monterey—General Mejia—Decrees and Proclamations of Ampudia.....	176
---	-----

CHAPTER V.

Monterey—Its Locality—Defenses—Garrison—American Force—Plan of Attack—Movement of Worth's Division to turn the Town—Demonstration on the East in Favor—Operations of the 21st on the East of Monterey—on the West—Inactivity on the East on the 22d—Operations on the West of the same Day—Advance into the Town from the East on the 23d—Withdrawal of the Troops—Advance into the Town from the West—Offer of Mexican General to Capitulate—Negotiations—Convention of Monterey—Observations	194
--	-----

CHAPTER VI.

New Mexico. Object of Expedition against New Mexico—Instructions to Colonel Kearney—His Movement—Nature of the New Mexican Government—of the People—Preparations for Defense—Flight of Amijo—Kearney takes Possession of Santa Fé—Establishes a civil Government—Marches to California—Observations.

California. Fremont's Expeditions—Controversy with General Castro—March to the North—Return—Affairs at Sonoma and with De la Tone—Declaration of Californian Independence—Instructions of Secretary of Navy to Commodore Sloat—He takes Possession of Monterey and San Francisco—Proclamation—Correspondence with Mexican Authorities—Succeeded by Commodore Stockton—Organization of California Battalion—Expedition to the Ciudad de los Angeles—Flight of Pico and Castro—Establishment of civil Government.

Chihuahua. Object and Organization of Chihuahua Expedition—Progresses to Monclova—Is given up.

Naval Operations in Gulf of Mexico. Blockade—Attempt upon Alvarado—Expedition to Tobasco..... Page 270

CHAPTER VII.

Views of American Authorities at Washington—Intended Expedition against Tampico—Ill Feeling of General Taylor toward the War Department—Its Cause—His Recommendation of taking up a defensive Line—*Observations*—Termination of Armistice—Advance to Saltillo—Occupation of Tampico—Action of General Patterson—Movement on Victoria—Taylor's Views and Intentions—*Observations*—False Alarms at Saltillo—Concentration of Force at that Point—Occupation of Victoria 311

CHAPTER VIII.

General Scott proceeds to the Theater of War—Expedition against Vera Cruz—Official Correspondence—Withdrawal of Troops from the Northern Line of Operations—*Observations* 340

CHAPTER IX.

Action of Mexican Authorities—General Santa Anna—His Difficulties—His Policy—Efforts of the Mexican Government to raise Men, Material, and Money—State of Things in the Capital—Scheme of sequestrating Church Property—Opposition of the Clergy—Meeting of Mexican Congress—Election of Santa Anna and Gomez Farias—Consideration of American Proposal to negotiate—Of Scheme of sequestrating Church Property—Is adopted—Fails—Movements of General Santa Anna upon receipt of intercepted American Dispatches—Strength of his Army—Advance to Encarnacion 362

CHAPTER X.

American Force about Saltillo—Capture of Borland's, Gaines's, and Heady's Commands—Arrival of General Taylor—Movement in Advance to Agua Nueva—Reconnaissances to La Hedionda and Encarnacion—Retreat to Buena Vista—Advance of Santa Anna from Encarnacion—Pass of Angostura—Affair of the 22d of February—Movement of Miñon's Cavalry—Saltillo—BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA—Mexican Retreat to Agua Nueva—Communications—Position of Santa Anna—His Retreat toward San Luis—Taylor's Advance to Agua Nueva—Expedition to Encarnacion—Urrea's Operations on American Communications—His Retreat—*Observations*. Page 378

CHAPTER XI.

Doniphan's Expedition into the Navajoe Country—Insurrection in New Mexico—Affair of Cañada—Affair of Embudo—Affair of Pueblo de Taos—Doniphan's March toward Chihuahua—Affair of Brazito—of Sacramento—American Occupation of Chihuahua—State of Affairs at that Place—Doniphan abandons it—Marches to Saltillo 445

CHAPTER XII.

Commodore Stockton's Action in California—Insurrection—Preparations to suppress it—General Kearney's Arrival—Affair at San Pasqual—At Hill of San Bernardo—Expedition from San Diego to Ciudad Los Angeles—Passage of the Rio San Gabriel—Affairs at Los Angeles—Fremont's Action in the North—Advance from Monterey—Surprise of San Luis Obispo—Advance to the South—Capitulation of Cowenga—Dispute between Stockton and Kearney—Kearney and Fremont—Arrival of Commodores Shubrick and Biddle, and Colonel Mason—Trial and Conviction of Fremont... 469

CHAPTER XIII.

Politics in the United States—Avowed Policy and Recommendations of the Administration at the Opening of the second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress—Action of Congress—Attempt to create a Lieutenant General—Provisions made by the twenty-ninth Congress for the Prosecution of the War—Politics in Mexico—Polka Rebellion—Return of Santa Anna to the Capital—Reorganization of the Army..... 496

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CHAPTER I.

Introduction—Sketch of Mexican History in the early Periods of Independence—Settlement of Texas—Texan War—Treaty with Santa Anna—Recognition of Texan Independence by the United States and other Powers—Mexican Action upon the Treaty—Public Sentiment in the United States—Mexican Outrages on American Property—American Action as recommended by Jackson—Suspension of diplomatic Intercourse—Action of American Government on Recognition of Texan Independence—Resumption of diplomatic Intercourse with Mexico, and partial Adjustment of Claims—French Claims, and Attack on San Juan d'Ulloa—Mexican Claim of Sovereignty in Texas—Correspondence on Interference of American Citizens—On Annexation—Negotiations for Annexation—Conclusion of Treaty—Is rejected—Mexican Action—Public Sentiment in United States—Election of American President—American Action on Annexation—British and French Policy—Passage of Joint Resolution for Annexation—Efforts of British and French Agents to defeat the Measure—Mexican Acknowledgment of Texan Independence—Rejected—Movement of American Troops into Texas—Location of Troops—State of Mexico—Downfall of Santa Anna—Herrera's Administration—Mexican Action on Annexation—Informal Proposition to United States—Mission of Slidell—Disturbance in Mexico—Failure of Negotiations—Paredes's Pronunciamiento—Fall of Herrera—Administration of Paredes—Return of Slidell—Motives of Paredes—Review—Monarchical Scheme—Almonte's Intrigues with Abolitionists—Paredes's Order to Arista to commence the War—Public Sentiment in United States—March of American Army to Matamoras—Views of Secretary Marcy—of General Taylor—Commencement of Hostilities—General Review—Military State of Mexico—Origin of her Army—Nature of People for military Service—Mexican Army—Resources—Military Policy of United States—American Army—Volunteers—Marine—Resources.

THE controversies in arms in which great nations of modern times have engaged have almost invariably been brought about by a long series of circum-

stances, so connected, that in their succession the danger of the conflict could hardly be perceived until its occurrence was inevitable ; for the gradual progress of free institutions of government has taken the power from the hands of the governing authorities of nations, to plunge their subjects unadvisedly into war, in pursuit of objects either of capricious fancy or private interest. Although the sentiment of the mass may be no less warlike than that of individuals, yet there can never be found in the action of free governments the utter disregard of the interests and wishes of different classes of the people upon a question of war which characterized the conduct of sovereigns in many national disputes of more ancient date. There must be a diversity of general national interest ; the nature of the belligerent people must be adverse ; the general course of national policy pursued by the authorities of each must be antagonistic ; and it often happens that the different steps of aggression and dispute are taken for immediate partial effect, both at home and abroad, without regard to the ultimate effect upon the peace of the countries. But as, in the accumulation of mistakes committed with such end in view, the controversy draws nigh, the cause of rupture is generally seen in some matter of recent date, instead of the course of events by which an infinite Providence has caused the advance of the world another degree in its progress to destiny, so the origin of the conflict is laid at the door of the authorities who hold power at the time of its

commencement, regardless of the entail, by the acts of predecessors, in the course of national policy on either side.

In the war with Mexico, the third great war in which the United States of America have been engaged since the declaration of their independence, this was especially the case. Different in origin, different in progress, different in character, different in religion, the two greatest republics of the earth are different in all things save in their name of republic. The United States are, and have been, the model of republican greatness, while Mexico is the type of republican anarchy. The one is the fruit of a system progressing gradually, and from a republican root; the other that of the hot-house graft of freedom on the decayed trunk of despotism. The founders of the first emigrated to the New World from the love of liberty and a hardy spirit of adventure, and, in their progress to national grandeur, they and their posterity watched, with jealous care, the encroachments of the king, who assumed to be their protector, upon their liberties. Of the rise of the second, the ultimate cause is to be seen in an unscrupulous love of gain; and bigotry, superstition, and most arbitrary tyranny were the means, in aid of physical force. The cause of controversy between adjacent countries, which have risen by such different means, and peopled, as they are, by different races, might ultimately be found, did space or time admit of following the thread of circumstance, in the action of their rulers at a compara-

tively ancient period. But from the time of the independence of Mexico, the question which was the immediate cause of war was agitated in some manner, and to relate so much of it as may be seen in the course of Mexican action thereon, and in the events of history of the same periods, reference must be had to the time of the first separate existence of Mexico as a nation.*

On the 24th of August, 1821, the treaty of Cordova was signed, and the colonies of Mexico became *de facto* independent of Spanish dominion. Prior to this the viceroyalty had been the theater of a long, bloody, and devastating civil war, which, commencing in the outbreak of Hidalgo, in 1810, had been carried on, with no permanent success on the part of the insurgents, until, on the 21st of February, 1821, the plan of Iguala was presented. Its author, Augustin Iturbide, was a Creole officer, high in rank and reputation with the Spaniards, and, un-

* For the facts of the early history of Mexico as an independent nation, and of her various early revolutions, the writer has consulted the works of Ward, Poinsett, Bullock, Mayer, Gilliam, and others. The facts in relation to the settlement of Texas, her struggle for independence, and the whole question of dispute until action upon the question of annexation, have been derived from documents made public from time to time in the discussion of the question before the American Congress. All referred to in the text may be found in the Congressional Globe of the periods of the discussion. As the sketch thus far is exceedingly general, no attempt has been made to give distinct references, except in the text; and it may be proper to remark, that several matters of controversy, which were no immediate cause of war (such as the seizure of Monterey by Commodore Jones), have been left unnoticed. It has only been endeavored to direct attention to the events which had a general national effect, and those in relation to the dispute which were the subject of continued correspondence on the part of the diplomatists of the two countries.

til that time, had been one of the most formidable opponents of the insurgent party. The movement met with complete success; for Iturbide controlled the army, which had hitherto supported the viceroyal authority, and, although the principles set forth in the plan of Iguala were not wholly acceptable to the old leaders of the rebellion, yet that plan had for its primary object the independence of Mexico; and, broken up as they were, powerless, and incapable of supporting their own views in arms, most of the chiefs who had escaped the fate of Hidalgo and Morelos promptly gave their assistance to Iturbide.

General O'Donoju, who had arrived in Mexico with the commission of captain general, seeing all efforts vain to oppose the revolution, proposed negotiations, and the treaty of Cordova was the consequence. The Spanish Cortes, however, with the peculiar obstinacy of their race, refused to acknowledge the independence of the colony, and by a resolution, which must be regarded as an exponent of their will rather than their intention, declared that the Spanish sovereignty should be preserved by force of arms, and that their troops in the country should be re-enforced, when neither men nor money could be spared from Spain, then in a position but little different from that which for ten years had been occupied by Mexico. By this refusal the advantages which might have resulted to Spain from the occupation of the Mexican throne by a Bourbon prince were given up, and no successful at-

tempt for the recovery of sovereignty was then or has since been made. In consequence, the author of the plan of Iguala was elevated to the throne of the empire.

The new monarch soon found that his seat was not one of idle repose nor of undisturbed possession. The ancient chiefs of the insurgents, although willing to co-operate with one of their former enemies for the attainment of Mexican independence, yet could not with complacency witness his elevation to supreme power. The manner in which the war of independence had been carried on was inductive of the revolts which soon took place, and of the unsettled state of public affairs which has ever since existed in Mexico. Arising first in the insurrectionary movement of a small party, led on by a man whose feelings were more of a personal than of a patriotic character, it had been conducted for much time by different adventurers on their own responsibility, without the sanction of any thing resembling a government, or of any body empowered, directly or indirectly, to act for the people. Each particular chief considered himself supreme in his own section of country; and many, while fighting for Mexican independence, free from all responsibility to superior officers or a representative body, forgot their object, and, in fact, warred for the plunder to be obtained from the rich store-houses of the Europeans. The first Congress, which had been assembled for the purpose of giving something like nationality to the insurrection-

ary proceedings, was powerless, and one of its own generals dissolved it in the darkest hour of the cause.

Chiefs in such a war, the old guerilla leaders were quite ready to revolt against the new emperor upon any grounds, either personal or patriotic, and that portion of the army which they had formerly led was quite as ready to follow them in new enterprises, while the troops whom Iturbide had seduced from their former allegiance, it was fair to suppose, could be easily induced to turn traitors to him. The population of Mexico had been reared in ignorance and slavery under the iron rule of the Spaniard, and, by the adoption of the plan of Iguala, had been suddenly admitted to a freedom of which neither the value nor the use was understood. Such a population is at first easily imposed upon, and will readily join for the time in any movement, no matter how it arises, which is heralded by the cry of liberty.

The storm soon came, and Santa Anna pronounced against the emperor at Vera Cruz. Iturbide was compelled to abdicate his throne, and a republican form of government was introduced, under which the veteran insurgent, Guadalupe Victoria, was first chosen president. He maintained his seat in the presidential chair until the expiration of his legal term of office; but party strife was violent during his administration, and the country was shaken by its civil discords. The president and vice-president, Bravo, were rivals, and, from

their dispositions and former habits, were each ready to support the parties of which they were respectively the heads by an appeal to arms. Indeed, on one occasion, in January, 1828, Bravo pronounced against the government, but was defeated and made prisoner. Nothing was effected during the administration of Victoria which could settle the affairs of the country, so long in a state of anarchy and confusion.

Mr. Poinsett was, during a part of this time, the resident minister of the United States near the Mexican government, and attempted to obtain the assent of Mexico to a boundary between the two countries which would include the settled territory west of the Sabine. This country had been ceded to Spain in 1819, but the American settlers had protested against the cession, and the government of the United States had previously attempted to recover it. But the Mexican minister of foreign affairs refused to negotiate on the point, although he was willing to conclude a treaty of alliance and of commerce, and such a one was negotiated, though not at that time ratified by the United States Senate. In 1827, the United States, through their minister, Mr. Butler, proposed to obtain the country desired by purchasing to the Rio del Norte, but Mexico rejected the proposal.

Grants of land in Texas were, however, made to foreigners, principally to citizens of the United States, and the colonization went on. The inducement for making these grants consisted in the pro-

tection hoped for from the settlers against the savage hordes who inhabited the northern Mexican frontier; but, had the Mexicans known their own character and that of their northern neighbors, they must have regarded such a policy as exceedingly dangerous. Indeed, changes of administration brought change of policy, and in 1830 the further colonization of Texas was forbidden.

The election of a president to succeed Victoria took place in 1828, and with it commenced the series of revolutions which have ever since, with few intervals of quiet, existed. Santa Anna pronounced at Perote in favor of General Guerrero against Pedraza, the president elect, and though checked for a time, yet the pronunciamiento was successful, Lorenzo de Zavala having moved in support of the plan in the city of Mexico; but Yucatan soon seceded from the republic, and Bustamente revolted against the new president. The war lasted for three years, when Guerrero was defeated, and, being taken prisoner by treachery, was shot. Bustamente assumed the presidency, and maintained it, against all opposition, until Santa Anna declared against him in 1832, when, after a few successes, he was defeated and obliged to quit the country. Santa Anna was, of course, elected president, and at once set about remodeling the Constitution. While the Congress was engaged in that work, the states of Zacatecas, and Coahuila and Texas, pronounced in opposition to the change, but were compelled by force of arms to submit. This was the commence-

ment of the Texan revolution, and led through a series of events, until the war in Texas terminated in one with the United States.

Under the grants of land made to citizens of the United States by the Spanish authorities, and the Mexican government under Victoria, emigrants had crowded into Texas until they had far outnumbered the Mexicans in that territory. The difference of race and education gave a natural desire to the settlers for their own form of government rather than the Mexican, and the population of Texas having increased sufficiently, a petition was sent to Mexico praying for admission into the Union as a separate state. The Mexican Congress paid no attention to this petition, and the messenger who bore it was imprisoned. Soon after, a Mexican military force appeared at Monclova, and its general required the surrender of the governor of Coahuila and Texas, and others. Failing to obtain them, he dispersed the Legislature, and ordered the American settlers to give up their arms. The natural consequence ensued, and in the first attempt to enforce the order, the Mexican troops were beaten back. The Texans, in convention, resolved to support the Constitution of 1824, and called upon the remaining states of the republic to sustain them in defense of the constitutional liberty of the country, overthrown by Santa Anna and other military chieftains. The appeal to the states of Mexico was disregarded, and the war continued. By the Mexicans it was prosecuted with savage ferocity, and

by the Texans with desperate valor, until, finally, in the darkest hour of her fortunes, Texas declared herself independent. The victory of San Jacinto soon followed, and the Mexican president found himself a prisoner in the hands of the insurgents.

His liberty was obtained by the conclusion of a treaty, in which the independence of Texas was acknowledged by him, as chief of the Mexican nation, and by Filasola, Urrea, Ramirez de Lesma, and Gona as chiefs of armies, and each and all were pledged, in their personal and official character, to procure the confirmation of the treaty by the legitimate government of Mexico. The southern and western boundaries of Texas were then defined to be the Rio Grande from its mouth to its source, as such were acknowledged by the Mexican president and his general officers; and their troops at once retired to the west bank of the river.

The independence of Texas being thus acknowledged by a treaty signed by the President of Mexico, and she having shown herself fully equal to its sustenance, its recognition was sought and obtained from the United States, and subsequently from Great Britain, France, and other nations. The grounds upon which this recognition was based could hardly have been cause of complaint on the part of Mexico, for the Texans were fully as capable of maintaining a stable government as were the Mexicans. Indeed, the conventions by which the independence of each had been recognized by the representatives of the mother country were made

under nearly the same circumstances. It is true, O'Donoju, when he negotiated the treaty of Cordova, was not an actual prisoner; but without men or means of carrying on the war, his accession to the terms of Iturbide was compulsory. The Mexican government, however, made the analogy between the fate of the two conventions still more striking; for, although Filasola was ordered to take measures to procure the liberation of the prisoners, yet it refused to ratify the treaty, and numerous resolutions were passed, setting forth that the sovereignty in Texas should be asserted and established by force of arms. Thus, like Spain, Mexico published to the world her pertinacity of dominion when she was notoriously incompetent to maintain it.

The struggle between Mexico and the revolted state was one of deep interest to the citizens of the United States, and its progress had been watched with unceasing anxiety. The settlers in Texas were of their own race, and engaged in a struggle with the military government of Mexico, which had overthrown the Constitution under which they had emigrated, and attempted to fasten upon them a despotism worse than that of absolute monarchy. With the same spirit which animated those Americans who had assisted Mexico in her efforts to gain her independence, many gave their persons and fortunes to the Texan cause.

Although cause of hostility to Mexico had existed for a series of years, and notwithstanding the

sympathy and assistance given by the people of the United States, the government of that country took no part in the operations.

From the first existence of the Mexican Republic, outrages upon the persons and property of American citizens were frequently committed by the Mexican authorities, and redress either positively refused, or delayed until the delay amounted to a refusal. The subjects of other powers suffered in a like manner, but to a less extent than those of the United States, the contiguity of whose position and the commercial character of whose people had led naturally to a more extended intercourse. For a long time the American government endured this state of things, and patiently awaited the day when domestic tranquillity would enable Mexico to attend properly to her relations with foreign powers. To none, at the time of the commission of the outrages alluded to, was Mexico under more obligations for the early recognition of independence, and the personal assistance of many citizens in its attainment, and by none was her progress watched with more anxiety, or with a more ardent desire for her success in the attempt at free government. But in the face of treaties of amity and alliance between the two countries, the outrages and spoliations continued; and no redress having been obtained, nor any disposition to render it having been manifested, on the 8th of February, 1837, General Jackson, then President of the United States, declared, in a message to Congress, "that the length

of time since some of the injuries had been committed, the repeated and unavailing applications for redress, the wanton character of some of the outrages upon the persons and property of our citizens, upon the officers and flag of the United States, independent of recent insults to this government by the late extraordinary Mexican minister, would justify, in the eyes of all nations, immediate war." In consideration of the state of Mexican domestic affairs, he did not, however, recommend an immediate resort to it, but proposed that another demand should be made for redress, to be followed up by reprisals upon Mexican commerce if not complied with.

The insults alluded to in the extract quoted were contained in the correspondence and conduct of Mr. Gorostiza, until a short time previous to the date of the message envoy extraordinary of Mexico at Washington. That diplomatist had taken umbrage at the spirit displayed by the American people in favor of the Texan cause, and at an order given by the American government to General Gaines for the protection of the southwestern frontier, then threatened with an Indian war, directing him, under certain contingencies, to pass the boundaries into Texas, then in a state which prevented any thing like a restraint of the Indians by Mexican forces. Upon the subject of the violation of American neutrality, communications had passed between the functionaries of the two governments, commencing November the 19th, 1835; but at that

time Mexico felt no apprehension for the result of the struggle, and she did not request any thing further to be done than the enforcement of the ordinary laws. This had been directed by Mr. Forsyth, then secretary of state, prior to the reception of the note of the acting minister of foreign relations of Mexico, and was so stated in his reply of January the 29th, 1836 ; but it was therein declared that the policy which the United States would pursue would be the same which had governed them during the various struggles between Spain and her South American possessions, and that the government could not be responsible for the conduct of individuals over which it had no control. Subsequently Mr. Gorostiza called the attention of Mr. Forsyth to the infractions of neutrality by certain citizens of the southwest, and measures were at once taken for their prosecution and punishment. But he insisted upon the withdrawal of the order to General Gaines ; and, in consequence of the refusal of the American president to comply with the demand, on the 15th of October, 1835, he asked for and obtained his passports, terminated his mission, and published a pamphlet containing a portion of his correspondence with the governments of Mexico and the United States, thereby appealing to the American people against the acts of their own government.

Not only was his course approved by the Mexican government, but its action was delayed upon the demand for indemnity for spoliations commit-

ted upon American commerce, and at the close of the year 1836, Mr. Ellis, then envoy from the United States to Mexico, demanded his passports. Diplomatic intercourse was thus suspended prior to the message of February, 1837.

During the progress of these events, Texas had asked for the recognition of her independence and for admission into the Union. The subject was spoken of by President Jackson in his message of December 21st, 1836, in which the desire of a large portion of the American people for the recovery of the territory is admitted; but, in submitting the question of recognition to Congress, having in ultimate view the annexation of Texas to the United States, he says, "It becomes us to beware of too early a movement, as it might subject us, however unjustly, to the imputation of seeking to establish the claim of our neighbors to territory with the view to its subsequent acquisition by ourselves. Prudence, therefore, seems to dictate that we should stand aloof and maintain our present position, if not until Mexico herself, or one of the great foreign powers, shall recognize the independence of the new government, at least until the lapse of time or the course of events shall have proved beyond cavil or dispute the ability of the people of that country to maintain their separate sovereignty, and to uphold the government constituted by them."

The independence of Texas was acknowledged in a resolution which passed the American Senate

on the first of March, 1837, but no steps were taken at that time for its annexation.

Another demand was made upon the Mexican government for redress, in accordance with the recommendation of the president and resolutions of the American Senate, before extreme measures were resorted to. Negotiations were insisted on, and a treaty of indemnity was concluded on the 11th of April, 1839, and duly ratified. By its terms, the claims of American citizens were to be referred to a commission, and that commission met in Washington on the 25th of August, 1840. It expired in February, 1842, and much of its time was fruitlessly expended in unimportant discussions of minor points, so frequent in the transaction of business with Mexican functionaries, in consequence of which a large amount of business was left untouched.

The Mexican government, soon after, asked for a postponement of the payment of the claims which had been allowed by the judgment of the commission, and the United States acceded to the request. Only a small portion of the amount due was paid, even with this extension, and the two governments were not able to conclude terms upon which another commission should be appointed for the decision of those claims which had not been audited at the time of the dissolution of the first.

In the mean while various revolutions had occurred in Mexico, and Texas was undisturbed save by a predatory warfare upon her borders. Santa

Anna, upon his return from captivity, found Bustamente in the presidential chair, and remained some time at his estate, taking no other part in public affairs than to command the troops at the city of Vera Cruz against the French. That power, tired with the vexatious delays, on frivolous pretexts, of the Mexicans, and having no particular sympathy for their form of government, was resolved to enforce the payment of claims, arising from outrages committed upon the persons and property of French citizens during the various revolutions, by something more strenuous than the negotiation of treaties, made only to be disregarded, and in the spring of 1838 proposed ultimata which the commander of the French squadron in the Gulf of Mexico was instructed to enforce. After much discussion, on the 27th of November the French made an attack upon the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa, then in a dilapidated condition, which was captured. The French were not so fortunate in their assault upon the town, and the British minister interposed his mediation. The French claims were nearly all allowed, and San Juan d'Ulloa was delivered up. The Mexican government soon after completely repaired the castle, and placed in it the heavy armament which renders it one of the strongest fortifications in America.

In September, 1841, Bustamente was overthrown, and Santa Anna became again the chief of the republic, which station he held as provisional president, dictator, and president until 1844,

when he was overthrown in turn, and forced to leave the country.

During this period the Mexican government and people insisted upon their right of sovereignty over Texas, notwithstanding the independence of the latter country had been recognized by most of the European powers, and Mexico herself had been unable to make any vigorous effort to re-establish her authority. But while Santa Anna exercised the supreme power the intention of making such an effort was continually spoken of, and, had sufficient means been at his disposal, there is no doubt that it would have been undertaken. The spirit which pervaded the United States in favor of Texas was known by Mexico, as well as the probability that much assistance in men and means would be privately furnished to Texas in case the quarrel should be actually renewed. This assistance was dreaded by the government of Mexico, and on the 12th of May, 1842, Mr. Bocanegra, then minister of foreign relations, addressed to Mr. Webster, the American minister of state, a paper, setting forth the alleged aggressions of citizens of the United States upon the soil of Mexico, declaring the belief that the government of the United States had the power, and was in duty bound to restrain the passage of men and munitions of war, under any circumstances, into Texas, and that Mexico "considered as a violation of the treaty of amity the toleration of a course of conduct which produced an incomprehensible state of things—a state

of neither peace nor war—but inflicting upon Mexico the same injuries and inconveniences as if war had been declared between the two nations.”*

On the 31st of May a circular was addressed by the same functionary to the members of the diplomatic corps in Mexico, setting forth, in a recapitulation of the asserted wrongs in allowing men and munitions to be sent to Texas, “the violation committed and the wrong done by thus acting in opposition to the most sacred principles of national law and the treaties of amity by which both countries (the United States and Mexico) were strongly bound.”

Both these papers were answered; the first, which was, in effect, a demand upon the United States to prohibit emigration to and trade with a country whose independence had been officially recognized by the great powers of Europe as well as themselves, in a masterly document from the pen of Mr. Webster, in which the power of the United States to prevent emigration was denied, and the right of their citizens to leave their own country in a private capacity, under any circumstances, was maintained; while, with regard to the alleged violation of treaty stipulations in permitting the export of arms or munitions of war to Texas, it was shown that the doctrine that a government was obliged to prevent the exportation of such articles was novel and absurd. By a reference to the sixteenth and eighteenth articles of the

* Appendix to Thompson's Recollections of Mexico, p. 285-304.

treaty of the 5th of April, 1831, between the two countries, it was demonstrated that such traffic had been contemplated, that those articles which were to be considered as contraband of war had been defined, and were to be allowed to meet the fate prescribed for them by the laws of nations, without its being the duty of either government to prevent the traffic in them by their citizens, in the case of war between either and other powers. The letter of Mr. Bocanegra was pronounced to be, in the end, a complaint against the recognition of the independence of Texas, and in that view was summarily disposed of, as it was stated that the acknowledgment of it was not likely to be retracted.

Toward the conclusion of the reply of Mr. Webster, it was said, "Every provision of law, every principle of neutral obligation, will be sedulously enforced in relation to Mexico as in relation to other powers, and to the same extent and with the same integrity of purpose. All this belongs to the constitutional power and duty of the government, and it will all be fulfilled. But the continuance of amity with Mexico can not be purchased at a higher rate. If the peace of the two countries be disturbed, the responsibility will devolve on Mexico."

The second, which appears to have been an inquiry how far the other powers of the world could be brought to interfere in behalf of Mexico in event of the threatened rupture with the United States, was answered in a circular addressed to the diplo-

matic corps by Mr. Thompson, then American envoy to Mexico, and contained, in effect, the same views which were expressed by Mr. Webster.

Both of these papers of Mr. Bocanegra failed to effect their objects, and contributed only to foster the prejudices existing in the one nation against the other, and imbitter the tone of diplomatic intercourse.

The subject of the annexation of Texas to the United States, which had before been spoken of, became prominent soon after, and was openly discussed in the public prints. The Mexican government became alarmed for the nominal sovereignty to which, for seven years, it had pertinaciously clung, and on the 23d of August, 1843, Mr. Bocanegra addressed a note to Mr. Thompson, in which his attention was called to the agitation of the question, and the United States were warned that Mexico would endeavor to prevent its consummation by an appeal to arms.* The note was couched in terms so threatening, and was in its tone so insulting, that no other answer was given by Mr. Thompson than to acknowledge its reception, and to deprecate strongly the threats which had in that, as well as in former communications, been put forth by the Mexican government. Mr. Bocanegra's answer to this note was more conciliatory. But the correspondence was dropped by the American minister, without speaking of the real dispositions of

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, p. 26-30.

his government ; and, perhaps, for the reason that the lapse of time and the course of events had proved, beyond cavil or dispute, the ability of the people of Texas to maintain their own sovereignty ; and, as a natural consequence, the annexation of that state to the Union was at that time contemplated.

On the 6th of October, 1843, the American secretary of state, Mr. Upshur, proposed a renewal of negotiations, in the face of the Mexican threats of war, and his proposal was accepted by Texas.

In the mean time the Mexican government issued two decrees,* the one prohibiting foreigners from the retail trade in Mexico, and the other shutting her northern custom-houses. Both seriously affected the interest of American citizens, and the first was alleged to be a violation of treaty stipulations by Mr. Thompson. Mr. Bocanegra maintained the contrary, and the Mexican government refused to rescind the decrees.

In November,† correspondence on the subject of the annexation of Texas was resumed between General Almonte, the Mexican minister at Washington, and the American secretary of state, in much the same style and with much the same result in which it had been carried on in Mexico. The envoy threatened war in case of the consummation of the measure, while the American secretary did not avow the intention of his govern-

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, p. 31-38.

† Idem, p. 38-48.

ment, but stated that the United States considered Texas as free and fully able to maintain her independence, and that they were not obliged to consult any other nation in their intercourse with her.

The negotiation of the treaty for the annexation went on, and on the 12th of April, 1844, it was signed by Mr. Calhoun, who had succeeded Mr. Upshur, and the Texan commissioners, Messrs. Van Zandt and Henderson. It was submitted to the American Senate, but was rejected by that body, and the diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico continued. The tone of the correspondence became still more unfriendly. The United States began to demand of the Mexican government the rescinding of the decrees before alluded to, prohibiting foreigners from carrying on a retail trade and shutting the northern custom-houses, while Santa Anna abruptly terminated the armistice which had existed for some time with Texas, prepared to renew the war with vigor, and to carry it on with the utmost severity. No quarter was to have been given to any foreigner taken fighting against the troops of Mexico, and it was evident that it was intended to be a war of extermination, if entered upon.

The American envoy at Mexico was instructed to inform the Mexican government that the renewal of the war with Texas while the question of annexation was pending would not be looked upon with indifference by the United States, and

to protest against it and the manner in which it was proposed to be carried on.*

But the Mexican government had compromised itself by the answer of Mr. Bocanegra to Mr. Green, American chargé d'affaires ad interim, when the latter informed him that the treaty of annexation had been signed.† In that document, after running over the arguments and protests which had before been used on the Mexican side of the question, and combating the positions of the United States as set forth in Mr. Green's note, he concluded by reiterating the declaration that Mexico would consider the ratification of the treaty as a declaration of war.

In thus committing themselves, the Mexican authorities fell into an error which has since been the cause of a foreign war, and of many and continued misfortunes to their country. The measures of public policy have been and are discussed with great freedom in the prints of the United States, and this was the case with the measure of annexation in particular. While its friends claimed for it all the merit it deserved, and indulged in anticipations of its success, its opponents were particularly violent, especially the Northern abolition prints, and its defeat was loudly predicted. In judging of the fate of the measure, the wishes and predictions of that party in the United States which

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, p. 21-27.

† Idem, Correspondence, p. 52-76.

was most favorable to Mexican interests seem to have had more weight than those of the opposite. Convinced that the treaty would fail, and with a true Mexican spirit of bravado, the government of that country chose to indulge in a correspondence the tone of which was exceedingly warlike, and, to insure its publicity, not only sent copies of it to the diplomatic corps, but had it inserted in the official journals. The treaty was rejected, and the Mexican government received a short-lived popularity with its own people as the result of its warlike declarations. But the correspondence had fostered a spirit of animosity between the two countries, which, perhaps, might have been allayed by a different tone.

Upon the arrival of an American frigate off Vera Cruz, the Mexican government became alarmed. Mr. Bocanegra inquired of Mr. Green the meaning of the appearance of this force, of certain articles which had appeared in the American newspapers, and whether the troops of Mexico would be opposed by those of the United States in their attempt to reconquer Texas. The answer from the American chargé d'affaires avowed an ignorance of the intentions of his government; but he expressed his belief that, if the force had actually been prepared, as stated in the newspapers, it had been induced by the oft-repeated threats of war on the part of Mexico.*

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, Correspondence, p. 76-90.

The correspondence thus resumed upon the subject was carried on with less bitterness than formerly, and the Mexican government appeared willing, while insisting upon the deep injury which had been done them by the United States, to avoid the event so often threatened. It, however, was premature, and before the facts; for, although a small brigade of United States' troops had previously been ordered to concentrate near the frontier of Texas, yet the object of the movement was conjectured rather than known by the authors of the newspaper articles alluded to by the Mexican minister, and it was not until some time after the correspondence,* September 17th, 1844, that the commanding officer was directed, under any contingency, to move into Texas. The ostensible purpose of the movement was to have been service against the Indians, and it was to have been made upon the requisition of the American chargé d'affaires at the Texan government. The ultimate object of this order was no doubt to place a small force near Texas, in readiness to repel a Mexican invasion, should it actually take place, while annexation was undergoing discussion, as well as to accomplish the object set forth in the order. But no requisition for the troops was made by the chargé, and they remained in their cantonments.

During the fall of 1844 occurred the election for

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, Correspondence of the Assistant Adjutant General with General Taylor, p. 37.

President of the United States. In this contest the question of the annexation of Texas was a prominent one. The correspondence which had taken place on the subject had been published, and the American people were fully cognizant of what had been done in the matter, as well as the obstacles which had been thrown in the way of its consummation by Mexico. It was discussed in every town and hamlet in the nation. Naturally anxious for the aggrandizement of their own republic, and with the remembrance of the outrages inflicted upon American citizens by Mexico, the long-delayed and partial redress, the nature of the Texan rebellion, as well as the barbarities which had been perpetrated by the Mexican troops in the prosecution of the war, the people entertained a spirit of hostility toward Mexico which caused them to look with little favor upon the position she had assumed, and her claim to perpetual sovereignty was regarded as preposterous. They could not believe that she could have any reasonable ground of complaint in the annexation of a territory to the American confederacy over which for seven years she had exercised no authority, and whose people were petitioning for the measure.

The United States had for thirty years enjoyed a period of prosperous peace, during which their resources had been more than doubled. No foreign war had occurred other than with Indian tribes along the frontiers, and the prospect of a collision was looked upon by the generation which had in

the mean time arisen with far more desire than apprehension. Confident in themselves, and panting for excitement, American citizens were perfectly willing to encounter the dangers and perils of war in defense of any great question of national right, and maintained their claim to another territory whose boundary was in dispute with a far more powerful and dangerous nation than Mexico with equal pertinacity—even at the risk of a war with Great Britain. With such a spirit, had any thing been needed to render their verdict upon the question of annexation certainly an affirmative one, nothing could have been found more effective than the oft-repeated threats of Mexico.

These principles were held by the Democratic party, and the speedy annexation of Texas and settlement of the Oregon boundary were sustained by it. The opposition conceded much of the question of right in both matters, but was more in favor of delay, and desired to avoid a rupture with either Mexico or Great Britain by the use of more moderate and temporizing measures. A party in the Northern States, actuated by a misjudged philanthropy, advocated the abolition of black slavery, and, on account of the existence of that institution in Texas, was opposed to the measure. But opposition to either the speedy settlement of boundary or the annexation found but little favor in the eyes of the people, and Mr. Polk, the democratic candidate, was elected to the presidency by a majority which could leave no doubt of the popular will.

President Tyler brought the subject before Congress again in his message of 1844, and urged it upon its attention, and immediately after the organization of the two houses joint resolutions were introduced for effecting the measure, and it continued for some time to be the all-absorbing topic of the session.

By the rejection of the treaty of April, 1844, the question had not only been placed before the people of the United States, but before the world, and European powers had had full and ample time for considering the effect of the measure. By them it was looked upon with no complacency. Negotiations had been carried on by Texas with France and England, and the influence of both was used against annexation with Texas and the United States.

They were actuated, as is always the case in diplomatic affairs, by their own measures of policy. Both were anxious to prevent the extension of slavery, if they could not effect its entire abolition. Great Britain, after many years of effort, had accomplished the emancipation of the slaves in her own colonies, and it became her settled policy to effect it throughout the world. Had she foreseen the injurious effect of the measure upon the colonies, it is fair to suppose she would not have been so anxious for it; but the deed was done. She had advised Texas to the abolition of slavery, and, from the letters of Lord Aberdeen upon the subject,

it was evident that whatever influence she possessed was to be exercised in its favor.*

The citizen king of France looked with distrust upon the growth of a nation which had once been, and might again be, an example for his people to hurl to the dust the throne around which he was endeavoring to collect the support necessary for the transmission of his power through his family to futurity, while his minister, Guizot, openly avowed the right of European nations to interfere in national affairs upon the Western continent, to preserve the balance of power.

The representatives of both France and England at Washington protested against the measure on the part of their governments ; but, although the protests were made, and the unfriendliness of the powers which made them was manifested, yet neither had any intention to carry the interference further. Their commercial interests forbade an appeal to arms ; and although their force was superior to that of the American Union, yet the increasing growth of a desire among their people for free institutions, with the example of the United States constantly before them, rendered such a collision exceedingly hazardous to the continuance of the power of their governments. But the same reasons made them extremely desirous of seeing a period put to the rapid growth of a nation, whose institutions, thus far firm and stable, were the result

* State Papers. Lord Aberdeen's letter, presented by Mr. Pakenham, February 26, 1844.

of the only successful experiment of a popular government known to history.

But the American people and their government had formed the determination of carrying the measure through; and the wishes of Texas having been long manifested, and recognizing her right to make such treaties as she deemed most proper without consulting Mexico, with the independence which has ever characterized their action in foreign relations, which has called forth the admiration of the prominent men of the Old World, and, in the language of one of their greatest historians,* “has set an example to the crazy despotisms of Europe,” the measure was discussed in the American national Legislature with no attention either to foreign protests or interests. Finally, after a spirited opposition, the joint resolution for the admission of Texas into the American Union passed both houses, and on the 3d of March, 1845, the president announced that he had given it his sanction, and that it had become a law.

On the 6th of March, the Mexican minister, Almonte, protested, renewed the declaration of the right of Mexico to recover Texas by any means which were in her power, and demanded his passports. They were transmitted him on the 10th by the Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan, who, while declining to reopen the discussion on the question of right, yet expressed, in a conciliatory manner, the wish of the president for an amicable

* Col. Napier.

adjustment of every cause of complaint between the two governments.*

Although the joint resolution had passed the American Congress, still the measure was not consummated. The consent of the people of Texas was required, and those opposed to the annexation looked anxiously to that quarter. The executive of Texas had hoped that the United States would have offered her more liberal terms than were set forth in the joint resolution, and was not indisposed to listen to the representatives of France and England, who endeavored to defeat the measure. Knowing the terms which would be offered by the discussion which had preceded the passage of the resolution, the Texan government had submitted to those envoys preliminary conditions for a treaty of peace between Mexico and Texas, the prominent features of which were, that the independence of Texas should be acknowledged by Mexico, and that she should bind herself not to annex herself, or become subject to any country whatever.† These preliminaries were forwarded to Mexico, and laid before the government, at that time Herrera's, backed by French and British influence. Alarmed at the near approach of the crisis, the Mexican executive submitted them to its Congress, and that body having given the necessary authority, they were agreed to, and Texas

* Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 38-89.

† Idem, Mr. Donelson's Correspondence with Mr. Buchanan and with Texan Officers, p. 40-105.

was informed that Mexico was disposed to commence the negotiation as she might desire, and that her commissioners would be received. But, as usual in Mexican correspondence on the subject, it was intimated that war would be a consequence if the preliminaries were not at once ratified.

Nevertheless, this result was not attained without (in the words of the Baron de Cyprey, French envoy in Mexico) "much management of susceptibilities," and the self-congratulation which was indulged in by that functionary in concluding his note which transmitted the acceptance of the Mexican government to the Texan president showed how much foreign influence had been brought to bear throughout the whole negotiation.

The attempt to defeat the measure signally failed, for the preliminaries were at once unanimously rejected by the Texan Senate, and its only effect was to give the friends of annexation an additional argument in favor of the actual independence of Texas, and her consequent right to make such dispositions as she thought proper.

On the 23d of June, 1845, the existing government of Texas gave its consent to the measure by the unanimous vote of both houses and the approval of the executive. The Convention to which the matter had been finally referred, by its ordinance of July 4th, 1845, assented to it, and annexation was concluded so far as Texas was concerned.*

* Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the twenty-ninth

Mr. Donelson, the American chargé d'affaires, wrote on the 28th of June to General Taylor, then in command of the United States forces on the frontier of Texas, that the measure was about to be consummated, and that, if reliance was to be placed upon the threats of Mexico, an invasion of Texas might be confidently anticipated. That the event was so probable as to justify the removal of his forces without delay to the western frontier of Texas, in order that he might be ready to give the protection which the president had felt himself authorized to offer.* General Taylor had received orders from Washington to hold himself in readiness to act upon the receipt of such information from Mr. Donelson, and took immediate measures for the removal of his troops to the position which he had been advised to take up for the defense of Texas. Seven companies of the second dragoons, the cavalry of his command, marched by land to San Antonio, while his infantry, the greater part of two regiments (third and fourth), moved to New Orleans, preparatory to taking transports for Aransas Bay.

The question of the boundary between Texas and Mexico rendered the proper position of the troops a matter of some doubt, for the joint resolution, as it finally passed, and under which Texas

Congress, Mr. Donelson's Correspondence with Mr. Buchanan and with Texan Officers, p. 40-105.

* Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Mr. Donelson's Correspondence with Mr. Buchanan and with Texan Officers, p. 105-109.

came into the Union, included explicitly that territory *rightfully belonging* to that country. Mexico had never positively ratified the treaty which acknowledged any boundary whatever, and as the United States had hitherto acted upon the state of things *de facto*, without attention to Mexican theory, the government, in its instructions to its general, looked to what had actually been held by Texas. By the treaty made by the Texans with the Mexican generals in 1836, the Rio Grande had been looked to as the boundary. In the proclamation of General Woll of June 25th, 1844, putting an end to the armistice which had before existed, every individual who might be found at the distance of one league from the left bank of the Rio Grande was regarded as an accomplice of the usurpers of the national territory.* This was considered as an admission that the country had been, and was at that time held by the Texans, and no change in the dispositions of the forces of either Texas or Mexico, which affected the occupation of the territory, had been made during the year immediately following. The Mexican general assumed too much in his proclamation, however, and gave an argument to the enemies of his country, for Texas had never held undisputed or uninterrupted possession of any post within the short distance of the Rio Bravo mentioned by him. Her claim to the river was a matter of doubt, although,

* Executive Document, No. 2, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-eighth Congress, p. 34.

perhaps, as far as the actual occupation or sovereignty of the country could support it, it was as good as that of Mexico, for neither party had exercised much control over, or collected many revenues from the scattered ranchos on the eastern banks of the stream. The claim of the country to the northwest, and to the banks of the Rio Bravo, rested entirely upon the treaty with Santa Anna and his generals, for the Mexicans held possession of it at the time, and the only effort which had been made to disturb them, the Santa Fé Expedition, had resulted in a total failure. No military measures were immediately taken by the American government to support the claim in that quarter. But General Taylor was directed to occupy San Antonio de Bexar, to take post west of the Nueces, and to approach as near the boundary claimed as prudence would dictate. But, while Taylor's forces were directed to pass to the west of the Nueces, the Mexicans had some small posts east of the Rio Bravo, and those he was directed not to disturb.*

On the 25th of July, 1845, eight companies of the third United States infantry arrived at Aransas Bay, and were temporarily established on Saint Joseph's Island. The difficulties of the coast were found much greater than had been anticipated either by the government at Washington or by the commanding general. Owing to the unsettled state

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Correspondence, p. 68-72.

of the country on the coast, it had been but little reconnoitered, and time was spent in selecting a depôt and a site for encampment. The bars were found to be so shoal that the transport service was one extremely troublesome and expensive. The want of timber and good water rendered it impracticable to select a good position for encampment immediately on the coast, while the nature of the service forbade, at that time, any distant movement into the interior. After much examination, General Taylor selected Corpus Christi, a point immediately west of the mouth of the Nueces, and which had long been in possession of Texas, as his post. To that place, during the fall of 1845, was dispatched the greater part of the small regular force of the United States.

During the progress of these negotiations and events, changes had taken place in Mexico, which, however, did not change the policy of her government in relation to this subject. In December, 1844, the pronunciamiento broke out, by which Santa Anna was deprived of power and banished from the country. Although he was firmly opposed to the annexation of Texas to the United States, and anxious to defeat it, yet the tone of the American press and the result of the presidential election told too plainly that Mexican opposition would be useless. His measures and actions indicated a disposition to recede from the warlike ground which had been assumed. They were received with marked disfavor both by the army and the people, who, ig-

norant of the real strength of the United States, had been too long indulged in the hope and cry for the reconquest of Texas and enmity to the Americans, to change it with the celerity which the crisis demanded. Santa Anna's administration had been rigorous and arbitrary, and there was but little wanting to turn the country against him. The opportunity was favorable for his enemy, Paredes, who placed himself at the head of the movement for his overthrow. He pronounced and was completely successful. Santa Anna was driven from the presidency, taken prisoner, and became an humble suppliant for his life at the mercy of the Mexican Congress. Herrera succeeded him, and, for a time, maintained an unyielding position with reference to the question of annexation. During the progress of the joint resolution through the American Congress, the Mexican was too much engaged in the disposal of the former president, and too much disturbed by the intrigues of his friends, to attend seriously to foreign relations. But, finally, that matter was disposed of, and Santa Anna banished. Upon the receipt of the news of the passage of the resolution, however, the American envoy was denied communication with the Mexican government, and, by permission of his own, soon after returned home.*

The government, in the mean time, by the influence of France and England, was induced to accept the proposition offered by the Texan execu-

* President's Message, 1846.

tive ; but, as has been seen, it was rejected by the Texan Senate. Mexico then found herself in the alternative of abandoning her position or of going to war. Had she possessed the means for immediate action, there is no doubt what her course would have been ; but those means were not at her disposal. In effect, she was bankrupt. The government of Herrera looked to the administration of affairs on liberal principles, and, while following that course, preparation for war was impossible in a country where public credit was gone, and where the tariff and taxes were already so high as to be extravagantly oppressive. Under these circumstances, Mexico was obliged to take into consideration the settlement of affairs by negotiation. The pride of her authorities would not suffer them to take the initiative ; but informal intimations, through Mr. Black, the American consul at Mexico, reached Washington about the 17th of September, 1845, to the effect that a negotiation might be opened with a prospect of success.* The President of the United States, anxious, if possible, to avoid a war, was willing to waive all ceremony, and to dispense with the request of Mexico to recommence diplomatic intercourse, which a strict observance of etiquette would have required, and the American consul was directed to ascertain confidentially whether an envoy from the United States, empowered to settle all questions in dispute between the two countries,

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 8-15.

would be received. The response is contained in the letter of Señor Peña y Peña, then Secretary of Foreign Relations, of October 15th, 1845, to Mr. Black, and, while reasserting the deep injury done to Mexico by the United States, and the determination of her government to demand ample reparation, yet accedes to the proposition, and agrees to receive a commissioner empowered to settle the controversy peaceably. The consent, however, was literally confined to the reception of a commissioner for the settlement of the dispute on the Texas Question, and did not apply to a plenipotentiary to reside near the government of Mexico, and this was afterward made the ground of refusing to receive the envoy. The answer also insisted that the naval force of the United States, then before Vera Cruz, should be withdrawn prior to the reception of a commissioner—a point considered necessary for the honor of Mexico, which her government and people have ever shown themselves ready to defend in words, although, in their acts, different successive governments have considered it of minor consequence.

Upon the receipt of this letter at Washington, Mr. Slidell was immediately accredited and sent to Mexico as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, and his letter of credence informed the Mexican president that he was aware of the sincere desire of the President of the United States to *restore*, cultivate, and strengthen friend-

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ship and good correspondence between the two countries.*

In the mean time, the matter was placed before the Mexican Congress, in secret session, and received its assent,† and the American squadron was withdrawn from Vera Cruz. But the negotiation was heard of by some of the opponents of the administration of Herrera, and at once became the subject of much angry discussion. The president and his ministers were denounced as traitors, and the feeling ran so high in opposition to the measure that, on the 4th of November, a revolution was openly talked of. Paredes, who had headed the movement which had placed Herrera in power, had his own ulterior purposes; and one of his pretexts for pronouncing had been hostility to the United States. He did not possess the confidence of the president and ministers, and, being in command of a large body of troops at San Luis Potosi, was dreaded by them. He was therefore ordered to break up his cantonments and send his troops to different parts of the republic;‡ an order which he was not very ready to obey, as, in effect, its execution would have deprived him of command, and of the opportunity of overturning the government whenever it was suitable to his purposes.

On the 29th of November, Mr. Slidell arrived at

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 22.

† Idem, Mr. Black to Mr. Buchanan, p. 13.

‡ Idem ibidem, p. 13.

Vera Cruz, and soon after started on his way to the city of Mexico. But on the announcement of his arrival to the Mexican government, it manifested more surprise than pleasure, and a dread lest the occurrence should be the cause of its overthrow, and the total defeat of any thing like peace.* In truth, the Mexican authorities were about right, for, at the very time they were consulting about the matter, their opponents were organizing a revolution which had been foreshadowed by the agitation of November. They were powerless; Paredes held most of the troops under his command, and their finances were prostrate. In the vain hope of holding on until the opening of the Mexican Congress, they resolved to delay their commitment to actual measures, and accordingly convoked the Council of Government (an irresponsible body, and containing many members decidedly hostile to the administration), and submitted to its consideration the credentials of Mr. Slidell and the question of his reception.† Various and many were the arguments there made use of against opening the proposed negotiation. Perhaps no body known in the civilized world can develop more ingenuity in searching for objections to a measure, at all inimical to its interests, prejudices, or fancies, than a Mexican junta; and, although the matter was placed before the members several times, they

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Mr. Black to Mr. Buchanan, p. 17.

† Idem, Mr. Slidell to Mr. Buchanan, p. 19.

disapproved of the measure, and advised that the American envoy should not be received. Fearful of being compromised in the business while the agitation on the subject continued, and having received such advice from the Council of Government, the Mexican minister, on the 20th of December, replied to Mr. Slidell, and, while reiterating professions of good faith in the negotiation, declared the determination of his government not to receive him, because he had been appointed, not solely for the purpose of settling the dispute relative to Texas, but came in the character of a plenipotentiary.*

But on the 15th, Paredes, having his own ends in view, not being particularly pleased with the conduct of the government, especially that part of it which ordered him to disperse his troops, had pronounced at San Luis, and moved his columns upon the capital. He was delayed a short time on account of a disagreement with the chiefs of the revolt in the city of Mexico. But, in the mean time, the garrisons of San Juan d'Ulloa, Vera Cruz, and Jalapa joined the insurgents, and, finally, on the 29th of December, the greater portion of the troops at the city of Mexico pronounced, and the government was left without support. But this had not been done without the manifestation of strong opposition on the part of all the civil authorities, and a show of resistance on the part of Congress, which denounced the plan of Paredes as an

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Mr. Slidell to Mr. Buchanan, p. 19.

undisguised military despotism, and declared its abhorrence of his treachery.* The explosion of these paper missiles was harmless to the revolutionists, and on the 30th of December Herrera resigned the presidency. Paredes entered the city on the 2d of January, 1846, and being, in fact, military dictator, set about organizing a government which suited his own purposes. It was made, and sanctioned by a junta of officers, and he, of course, declared the president.

Upon the receipt of the news of this last revolution at Washington, the American government, anticipating the refusal of the Mexican to receive its envoy, and fatigued with the attempt at negotiation with an impracticable government, changed by the word of a military chieftain, himself impracticable, ordered the general in command of the troops at Corpus Christi to prepare an advance to the Rio Grande, and the squadron of the navy in the Gulf of Mexico to be increased.† Nevertheless, Mr. Slidell was directed not to leave Mexico without making another attempt to obtain a hearing from the new government. He had removed to Jalapa, and from thence addressed a note to the new minister of foreign relations, representing his credentials, and asking to be received. On the 12th of March, the answer of Mr. Castillo y Lanzas was written, which, after setting forth in full the

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Mr. Slidell to Mr. Buchanan, p. 27.

† Idem, Correspondence, p. 76-82.

alleged wrongs and injustices committed by the United States against Mexico, refused to receive the American plenipotentiary as such, and ended by intimating that his government was preparing for war. It was asserted that the United States had already commenced the war by the location of their troops at Corpus Christi, and the station of a squadron off Vera Cruz. Mr. Slidell replied on the 17th, and, after denying the assertions and refuting the arguments of the Mexican minister, demanded his passports, and on the 1st of April left Mexico.*

The motives which influenced the government of Paredes were obvious. That personage, however much he might have disguised his sentiments, was strongly in favor of the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico.† Ambitious, proud, and poor, and possessing a talent for agitation, that end by which he hoped for permanent personal aggrandizement was the wish of his heart. The disposal of Santa Anna was necessary to the success of the designs, opposed as he was to the establishment of any other monarchy than his own dictatorship, and, whatever else may have been his faults, devoted as he was to the maintenance of Mexican nationality. His disposition to open negotiations with the United States, and to recede from a position, the maintenance of which could

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, Correspondence, p. 65-67.

† Idem, p. 41-49.

only bring misfortune on his country, was made, with other pretexts, the cause of his overthrow. The time for proposing the plan of monarchy had not arrived when Santa Anna was hurled from power and banished. Herrera was elected president—a naturally good man, and with sufficient energy to carry out the ordinary measures of good government with any practicable nation, but with not enough of energy or of head to control the elements of disorder ever at work in the Mexican army and people. The distrust of Paredes induced the order to disperse his troops, and that occasioned Herrera's downfall. On finding himself in power, Paredes, with the assistance of Don Lucas Alaman, prepared an edict calling together the Congress, and prescribing the mode of its election. By it the majority of the representatives was given to that class of persons whom he believed to be favorable to his own views, and it may have been hoped that, could the Congress elected under that convocataria be assembled, decided measures would be taken for calling a foreign prince to the throne of Mexico. That negotiations with the King of the French, having that end in view, had been carried on, was evident from the manner in which the subject was discussed by the leading government journals of France, in which it was asserted that the good of humanity, and of Mexico herself, demanded the interference of European powers, and the erection of a monarchical government in that country.

But, in the mean time, the government of Paredes, like that of its predecessors, was committed to a war with the United States, and it could not hope to sustain itself for any time unless its promises were carried out. To silence opposition while the plans of the president progressed to maturity, it was resolved to prosecute it, and that, too, with a fair prospect of primary success. San Juan d'Ulloa was in good defensible condition, with a powerful armament, and could bid defiance to any fleet which could be sent against it. The whole American force on the northern frontier of Mexico amounted to but little over three thousand men, and the result of the conflicts in which American troops have astonished the world by their success against overwhelming numbers could not then have been anticipated. Being successful, it would have been easy, under the eclat which would have attended the military operations of the existing government, to have carried out the proposed measure, and, before the United States could have reorganized their forces for a renewal of the war, interference on the part of the European king, from whose family the prospective Emperor of Mexico was to have been selected, could have been looked for with confidence. Moreover, the question of the Oregon Territory, which, during the session of 1845-6, was agitated in the American Congress, had assumed a troublesome aspect, and rendered it highly probable that Great Britain would be a party opposed to the United States; and, finally, the opposition party of the American

people was looked to to defeat the measures of their government. Nor was reliance placed entirely upon the manifestation of their sentiments in public prints. Almonte, after receiving his passports from the United States government, had tarried long enough in the country to concoct, with some abolitionists of black slavery, whose crazy philanthropy enabled them to look upon high treason with Mexican eyes, schemes of action by which they were to assist the Mexican against their own government, should the war break out, and the hostilities be actually commenced.* Upon his return home he mixed in the intrigues resulting in the accession of Paredes to power, and took the post of secretary of war and marine; one which, under the circumstances, was congenial to his tem-

* The correspondence of citizens of the United States and members of the opposition party with Mexican functionaries has been extensively believed. And a sufficient cause to induce the belief among the supporters of the administration of Mr. Polk was found in the course of action of many prominent men during the war; but the assertion in this place does not rest upon probability. When the city of Mexico was occupied by the American army in 1847, there were found in the Mexican post-office numerous letters from this class of persons to officers of the Mexican government, principally to Almonte, who had been, at the time, for some months in prison by order of Santa Anna. Two of these letters fell into the hands of the author. The first, over the signature of Lewis H. Putnam (perhaps fictitious), went so far as to speak of a movement in arms against the United States government. The object of the letter may have been to obtain means in money from the Mexican government to raise the riot, with the intention of ultimate fraud. The second is, however, evidently written in good faith. The author had the good sense to omit his name and the place of date; yet he is evidently a man of talent, information, and probably of high situation about the government at some period. Certainly, whoever he may have been, he had access to authentic sources in studying the history, public and secret, of the Mexican dispute.—See *Appendix*, Nos. 1 and 2.

per, though it is doubtful whether his talent would have been sufficient to have managed his auxiliaries with success had they made their movement in any decided manner.

Money was accordingly raised by extraordinary efforts. The army was paid, though the civil employées were neglected, and the preparations for the chastisement of the "barbarians of the north" were pushed with all the vigor which Mexico possessed.

Notwithstanding all this, however, the opposition increased, and as early as March, 1846, a pronunciamento against Paredes was agitated, while, with the admirable inconsistency of the Mexicans, Santa Anna, scarce one year banished, was spoken of as the chosen leader of the movement.

To silence opposition, and incidentally to give employment to a general officer who was the last to give in his accession to the new administration, and whose indefinite proposals for a revolt in the north had not been received with great favor by the American general to whom they had been made, the Mexican army of the north was ordered to advance on Matamoras, and, on the 4th of April, General Arista was directed to cross the Rio Grande, and attack and destroy the American army by every means in his power.

The progress of events which were gradually bringing the two nations into collision was watched with great interest in the United States. The movement of the small body of troops which had

entered Texas was particularly observed by the public, and from time to time rumors of its danger were put forth, and once of its actual defeat. These induced General Gaines, who commanded at New Orleans, to forward to Corpus Christi a small reinforcement of volunteer artillery; nor were the fears of the public for the safety of the troops allayed until the arrival at Corpus Christi of such a number as made the safety of the corps no longer problematical in case of an attack by any force of the Mexicans known to be in the vicinity of the Rio Grande was announced. The Oregon Question, for a time, drew off public attention from the affairs in Texas and with Mexico, but it soon became evident that that matter would be settled without a resort to arms. The public attention was again directed to the southwest, and the negotiations pending in Mexico during the winter of the years 1845-6 were chronicled by the press as fast as they became public. The prevailing sentiment in the public mind with regard to the conduct of the Mexican government was disgust at its inconstancy of purpose, and contempt for its imbecility.

On the 8th of March the army marched from Corpus Christi. The news of its progress toward the Rio Grande, and its arrival on its banks without any physical opposition, became public in the United States, and the general opinion with the American people now was that, after having exhausted her spleen in threats, and after two or

three more revolutions in her government, Mexico would abandon her purpose of hostility and make the best she could of circumstances. The most that was apprehended was the continuance of the non-intercourse which, under the name of a war, she had maintained for such a number of years in regard to Texas. This was also the prevailing opinion with regard to the matter in the American Congress, and the contingency of war was deemed so remote that it was with the greatest difficulty that an increase of the army by one regiment of mounted rifles was pressed through, and that for an object having no reference to Mexican hostility. Both people and Legislature were unprepared for the events which soon followed.

But, from the time of ordering the advance on Matamoras, the American secretary of war appears to have been aware of the danger to which General Taylor's corps might be subjected in carrying out the objects for which it had been sent, and in the letter which ordered his forward movement, that officer was directed to report to the department what means he might require, if any, beyond those which he then possessed, to enforce and maintain a common right to navigate the Rio del Norte, together with his views as to its importance for the defense of Texas. He was, however, directed not to enforce it without instructions, and was reminded of the change in the relations of Texas to the United States, which enabled him to make a direct requisition upon the governor for aid,

should it be needed. Long prior to this, General Taylor had been empowered to call upon the governors of the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama for a similar purpose. General Taylor answered on the 4th of February, 1846, and delayed his report until he should ascertain the temper and disposition of the people on the Mexican frontier to which he was approaching. That, he had reason to believe, was favorable to the Americans; and he stated his determination to call for no more militia force in addition to the few companies which he then had until circumstances rendered it necessary. On the 16th of February he wrote again, and warned the department against paying attention to exaggerated accounts of the Mexican preparations to oppose his advance and for the invasion of Texas, and expressed the hope that they would have no effect. His belief was that his advance would be unresisted, although he stated that he should be prepared for a state of hostilities should they be provoked.*

Still, the feeling of security so confidently expressed by the general was not fully entertained by the secretary, and in his letter of March the 2d he again reminded him of his power to call for volunteers, and directed him to use it efficiently, and suggested that his position, while it was nearer the enemy, was further from support, and that it was necessary to take more than ordinary pre-

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 68-105.

cautions. But, having confidence in his troops, and no desire for increasing the expenditure of the service or the excitement of the public by a call for assistance upon an uncertain contingency, General Taylor did not deem it necessary to act upon the suggestions of the letter until some time subsequently ; and, in consequence of the want of information and difficulty of communication, no further instructions were given him from the War Department.

But in a short time news of a warlike character arrived in the United States, and was soon confirmed by that of the murder of Colonel Cross, assistant quarter-master general of the army, the defeat of a party under Lieutenant Porter, and of the capture of Captain Thornton's squadron of dragoons. The greatest excitement prevailed throughout the nation, and the anxiety for the fate of the little army was intense. Its imminent danger silenced opposition to hostility, and all looked with eagerness for the action of the government. For some days nothing was heard from the seat of war, and rumors were rife of the defeat and annihilation of Taylor's corps, while the cry for action became daily stronger with the people.

On the 11th of May, immediately after the receipt of the news of Thornton's capture, the President sent a message to Congress, calling upon it to make provision for the support of the war with Mexico, brought on by the act of Mexico herself. The difficulties and disputes with that country for

a series of years, and the efforts of the United States at conciliation, were enumerated. The cup of forbearance was declared to have been exhausted long previous to the reception of the intelligence of the recent occurrences upon the frontier, and the fact was announced that now, by the acts of her generals, Mexico had proclaimed that hostilities had commenced, and that, in pursuit of them, American blood had been shed upon American soil. In pursuance of the recommendation of the commanding general, Congress was called upon by the President to pass a law authorizing the employment of a large body of volunteers for twelve months, to make provision for sustaining the entire military force, and furnishing it with the material of war.*

The act was passed on the 13th of May, and the existence of a state of war was officially recognized.

In the above sketch, the principal events which took place, bearing upon the dispute between the United States and Mexico, from the existence of the latter until the breaking out of hostilities, have been marked. A short review of those occurrences may not be misplaced.

The increase of the United States since the formation and adoption of the Federal Constitution, in extent, power, and prosperity, has surpassed the fondest anticipations of the framers of that wise instrument, and has startled the world, which, in

* Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

the decay of ancient institutions, watches their progress. Under the free and popular government, each man is left to struggle with his fellow for power and distinction, unshackled by the ordinary restraints which have been imposed by the ancient systems of the Old World, and the education and temper of the people are such that their freedom has hitherto been enjoyed with moderation. In the spirit of enterprise which is thus brought into life and cherished, the American is constantly in observation for some new opening for his exertions and for his success. It caused the early settlement of Texas, the obtainance of the Mexican grants, and colonization of the country to the extent which alarmed the Mexican government, and induced it, too late, to repent of its primary policy, and to forbid immigration. The revolutions of Mexico and the central despotism of Santa Anna aroused the resistance of the settlers, and the means resorted to by that chief to support his authority, who, although aware and fearful of the enterprise of the colonists, was ignorant of their warlike character, or, if aware of it, too vain to dream of successful resistance by a handful of adventurers against the "Napoleon of the West," were arbitrary and despotic in themselves, and enforced, so far as they were enforced, with a cruelty and ferocity which drew upon the Mexicans the indignation of mankind. The signal defeat with which the effort was attended rendered the revolted state *de facto* independent, and the treaty made

with the Mexican generals gave to it as much of the sanction of law as could have been obtained from a government so wedded to the maintenance of false principles, and so treacherous in the course of its policy as the Mexican has been. Seven years elapsed before the government of the United States, notwithstanding the applications which had been made, and notwithstanding the desire early manifested and expressed until the commencement of the Texan revolution, entered into negotiations for annexation, and during that time none but abortive attempts had been made by Mexico to repossess herself of the territory. Its independence, and consequent right to make treaties and dispose of itself in its own way, had been recognized by the world, with the exception of Mexico, and not till then was the proposition considered with a view to action. The treaty was made, but the Senate of the United States, anxious for the opinion of the nation upon a measure so important, and of so novel a character, rejected it. Whatever may have been the use made of the question by politicians for party purposes, and how much soever it was made to subserve them, the verdict of the people was decisive, and the same Senate which had rejected the treaty gave its consent to a joint resolution with the House of Representatives for the same end.

In the mean time, Mexico, tenacious of possession in words, when, in fact, she had been forced to relinquish it, and trusting to the loud-mouthed opposition of a party in the American Union, had be-

come compromised in the event of the consummation of the measure even to the extent of a war with a power to which, either in arts or in arms, she was and had been but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Perhaps, had the measure been then delayed, and negotiations for the purchase of the claim of Mexico been offered by the United States, the rupture might have been avoided. But the speed with which those opposed to the measure would have rushed to the support of the delay, and the extreme publicity of the proceeding of republican assemblies, might again have deceived Mexico into the fallacious hope that it was owing to her oft-repeated threat of war, and that the fear of its prosecution would, if the threat was persisted in, cause the total defeat of the measure, and indulge her still in her asserted possession. The pride, folly, and obstinacy of her people experience has shown to be fully equal to such conclusion.

And, moreover, the independence of Texas had been recognized, and the attempt at purchasing a territory from Mexico over which she had no recognized right to authority would have placed the United States in a position somewhat false.

But the measure passed the American Congress, and the diplomatic intercourse between the two countries was suspended. Mexican consuls were directed to close their business and inform their citizens that their functions had ceased. Their Congress passed the necessary bills to enable the government to prosecute the war and to raise

money for its support; but the passage of the law was easier than to effect a loan, and Mexico found herself—after all her declarations, protests, and attempts to maintain an obsolete principle of perpetual sovereignty, which, had it been observed by other nations, and sustained by her own mother country, would have compromised her own nationality—powerless, and compelled to yield to circumstances. At this time the President of the United States, waiving all ordinary rules of diplomatic etiquette, and sacrificing to his desire for peace the regulating principles of national intercourse—which the condition of Mexico enabled him to do without subjecting his government to the charge of timidity—took the initiative by sending an envoy with full powers to treat on the subjects in dispute. The Mexican government had looked at first favorably upon the renewal of negotiations, for at length it was fully aware of the difficulties and dangers attending the execution of its threats. But it was odious to the people and the army, who had too long been indulged in the cry for hostilities for sustaining the honor of their magnanimous nation, and in a false belief in their own strength, to change the one into a tone of compromise and conciliation, or the other into a true and unexaggerated estimate of their condition. By them the frequent and strenuous efforts for peace made by the Americans were mistaken for an exponent of American weakness; and for a proof of it, they pointed to the small force on the frontier,

which comprised the larger part of the army of the United States, and asked whether the sons of Hidalgo and Morelos were to be vanquished by so small a number of the "barbarians of the North." Their delusion was not dissipated by the American general, who was necessarily ignorant of the state of affairs, and who, while in the dark chaos of Mexican politics some glimmering of the light of peace was seen, hesitated to avail himself of the means which were at his disposal for an increase of his force.

The Mexican government met the defeat which awaits all governments attempting measures much in advance or behind the spirit of their people. Defeat with it is followed by a revolution; and that came, notwithstanding the endeavor, by temporizing and bad faith with the United States, to turn aside the storm. The power passed from the hands of Herrera, and a military aspirant for the position of a king-maker seized it for his own purposes. He found himself obliged to carry out the measures of hostility, and all prospect of peace was lost. Immediate action was necessary for primary success, and his best and most disposable troops were moved on Matamoras, crossed the Rio Bravo, and commenced the war. And, notwithstanding the peaceful policy of the government of the United States, and the prevailing belief that hostilities would be avoided, the mass of the American people was quite willing to accept it.

The state of military preparation existing in the two countries at the commencement of the war was as different as their natures, their people, or their policies. The government of Mexico had always been controlled by the army; and, as in all cases where the proper subordinate agent becomes the superior, injuries both to its own efficiency and the welfare of the state had resulted. Springing from the masses of the people, and actuated as much by a spirit of revenge for private griefs as by patriotic feeling, the various chiefs of the revolutionists had sustained themselves in the war of independence in a manner which respected but little the rights of peaceable citizens. One object which they had in view in all their proceedings was to hold perpetual military rank; and, to obtain their support, as well as that of the army under his command, Iturbide declared, in articles sixteen and seventeen of the plan of Iguala, "*that this army should be considered as of the line,*" as well as all "*the old partisans of independence*" who should immediately adhere to it. They were so considered, and the incubus of a large standing army was fastened upon the infant country, which only passed from the dominion of Spain to come under the changing military despotism of its own chieftains. The composition of the army was such as to render it an easy instrument to be worked by factious chiefs, who sought to subvert the measures of the government for their own ends. Various guerilla leaders, whose irresponsible and predatory warfare

had been carried on throughout the country as best suited their purposes, were not likely to yield implicit obedience to a poor government, administered by one of their own number, and no great genius was immediately at hand, who, by the power of his mind, could remedy the evil, and reduce the discordant elements to discipline. The army remained as it was in the first days of Mexican independence, and was employed from time to time in fighting itself, on the side of one pronunciado or another, all of whom were, like Iturbide, pledged to its support.

But, after the lapse of years and a series of revolutions, the moral power which makes the great strength of military bodies and renders them invincible was, in great measure, wanting to the Mexican army. The cry of liberty, which had aroused the first insurgents, and given them an enthusiasm which bore them even to the muzzles of the cannon, as at the battle of Las Cruces, had lost much of its force. The masses of Mexico found that revolutions brought only change of masters; and so frequent had they become, that, like festal days, they produced but temporary excitement. Obedience to new authorities was yielded until the next pronunciamiento, which would produce no more enthusiasm or interference on their part than the former. The common people hated the military service, and, when forced into it, served mechanically, upon compulsion, being perfectly willing to desert upon the first occasion which offered

impunity. Still, the material of the Mexican army was characterized by many of the necessary qualities of a good soldiery. Patient under suffering, requiring but little subsistence, with extraordinary capacity for enduring fatigue, and with quite enough of physical courage to enable them to encounter danger without fear, the Mexican troops might, if properly led, compare well with the troops of other nations. But corruption existed among their officers from the highest to the lowest grade, and commissions were given from time to time by the functionaries of the government as rewards for the most disgraceful private services, disgraceful alike to the doer and the recipient. The prospect of a foreign war was, however, new, and the distant contingency had afforded means for arousing some enthusiasm of a national character. The greater portion of the army was ignorant of the enemy, and, in the pride of their race, overlooking their own condition, the Mexican officers and soldiers flattered themselves that they were invincible. As they wished for laurels in a foreign war, and as experience had not taught the greater portion the fallacy of their anticipations, they had been induced to join in revolts against two successive governments, which, knowing the actual situation of their country, strove to avoid the danger.

The Mexican army included, besides the troops of the line, the active battalions of the different states and the local national guards of the cities.

The cavalry, principally of lancers, had a high though factitious reputation both at home and abroad. Many corps were fairly disciplined, and the men were expert in all the feats of horsemanship peculiar to Mexico, as well as the use of their lances. The horses of the country, however, wanted both speed and power, though endurance they possessed in a remarkable degree. The carbines with which the cavalry was armed were, for the most part, of an ancient model and manufacture, and, where accuracy of aim was necessary, were useless.

The Mexican artillery numbered many foreigners among its officers, and most of the juniors were élèves of the Military College of Chapultepec. They had there acquired much of the theory of their profession, and the nature of Mexican revolutions had given them much practice. As far as the actual gunnery went, they were exceedingly proficient. Their guns were fine, but clumsily mounted, and, in consequence, had but little mobility. Light artillery, as practiced by modern troops, was but little known or used by the Mexicans until it was taught them by their enemy.

The Mexican infantry was in many regiments tolerably drilled, and a severe discipline was enforced with the privates. All ceremonious points and detail duties were strictly carried out. The muskets of the infantry were inferior, and the men were by no means proficient in their accurate use.

The organization of the staff of the army depend-

ed much upon the general who happened to be in command, and, from the nature of things, the civil staff was filled in any convenient method. Of engineer officers, Mexico had many of talent and skill, and the practice of their revolutions had made them perfect in the branch of field fortification.

Of general officers there existed an enormous disproportion, and so great was their number that it was a common remark that they had rather a brigade of generals than generals of brigade. With all of them, however, there were few who possessed any other talent than for the pomp and circumstance of war, and probably there was not one in service combining the various attributes of a general.

Mexico's whole military force of all arms was stated variously between thirty and fifty thousand men, both by foreigners and their own authorities. And it was at least equal, at the commencement of the war, to the lower of the numbers. Scattered as it was under different chiefs, and consisting of troops of different kinds, it would be difficult to ascertain the precise number. It is hardly probable that it was accurately known at Mexico.

The country was full of arms and munitions of war, such as they were. They were of ancient manufacture, and for replenishing the supply dependence was necessarily placed upon importations. Mexico had but few resources in her own mechanics, certainly none beyond the repair of partial damages, and such an establishment as a na-

tional armory was unknown in the republic. At the great fortifications and in some large cities there were partial establishments, but, in comparison to the size of the armament, they were but trifling.

Of maritime power Mexico was utterly destitute. She had attempted to organize something of a navy, but, as in the various revolutions the navy could be made no instrument of success on the side of either pronunciado, it had been lost sight of, and died from want of sustenance. A few steamers and sail vessels of small class were on her list at the commencement of hostilities, but the government lacked both money and energy to fit them out. Indeed, it may well have been good policy, for they would soon have been captured by the enemy; and as Mexican pride had never been flattered by any maritime exploits, no boasting pretensions were put forth in support of that arm of national defense which could induce the attempt at naval warfare.

In the numerical strength of regular soldiery the United States were exceedingly deficient. It has never been their policy to keep upon foot a large standing army, against which species of force a prejudice has existed since the days of the Revolution. Indeed, nothing but necessity, taught by experience, induced the early Congress to substitute the continental line for the three and six months' volunteers who first served the different states in their rebellion. It was disbanded imme-

diately after the war, and, true to their principles, officers and soldiers of the army made no opposition to the action of a government which was powerless against their strength, and, without their arrears of pay, broke up and returned to their homes. Under the first presidents, a small force was kept up for protection upon the Indian frontiers, and incidental service upon the seaboard. But it was never increased much beyond the actual and indispensable wants of the government, and, when necessity had passed away, was again reduced.

The limited permanent force which the adopted policy of the government allowed, led different administrations to look to the improvement of such as was in service. In 1812 the Military Academy was established for the education of officers of the army, and during subsequent years the course of military instruction had been enlarged, until it became as perfect as the length of time allowed the cadets would permit. The permanent establishment of the school had not been accomplished without strong opposition on the part of state governments as well as of the people. The institution was denounced as aristocratic in its tendency and useless in effect. But the efforts for its suppression were vain, and it has ever since furnished nearly a sufficient number of graduates to fill the regiments and corps of the army. The course of instruction there received, and the secluded life led for four years, devoted entirely to military studies and pursuits, it can not be denied, have a tendency

to create an exclusive class, and cause the young graduates to look upon an uneducated soldier with but little sympathy or consideration, and to think lightly of the policy of their country which places her reliance upon her citizens rather than upon a standing army. But the graduates of the Military Academy have, upon entering the service, the full theory of their profession, and when their deeds in their country's service are remembered, it may well be said, without incurring the charge of vanity, that they form a body of officers which, in education, talent, and bravery, has no superior in the world.

In 1845 the American army consisted of two regiments of dragoons, four of artillery, and eight of infantry, with the different departments of the staff. The latter were larger than were actually required for the troops of the line in service, but the engineers and ordnance officers were employed in carrying out the policy of the government—that of building all necessary fortifications, and keeping on hand a large quantity of the imperishable material of war, ready for defense and use by the citizens, should the state of foreign relations render it necessary.

The United States dragoons were well mounted, and well disciplined as light cavalry, to which their duties were confined ; and although the short term of service did not allow their officers to make them, in bearing, equal to the finished cavalry soldiers of Europe, yet they were highly efficient in their proper arm.

The artillery, for the most part, had been confined to the service of fortifications, and the men had no instruction in their own arm, except in the manual exercise of the heavy guns. The duties of construction usually devolving upon the artillery in foreign services, in the American were assigned to the ordnance, by which the artillery officers and soldiers were deprived of the opportunity of acquiring the most practical part of their profession. In the exigencies of the service, created by the different Indian wars, the artillery men had often been ordered to the field as infantry, and kept for long periods in service as such, a proceeding certainly not calculated to increase their proficiency as artillerists. But, under the administration of the War Department by Mr. Poinsett, it was noticed that the artillery of the United States was far behind that of the nations of Europe, and had not even a nucleus upon which to form an efficient corps in one of its most important branches. To remedy the evil, one company of each regiment was organized as light artillery, and by the diligence of the officers were soon brought to a state of discipline and efficiency which was rightly considered a maximum. By the order of the general-in-chief, the junior officers of the artillery had served in these companies in succession, and nearly all of them were proficient in practice as well as theory of that branch of their duty.

Although the infantry of the American army was much scattered from the nature of the service,

and, in consequence, the practice of military tactics upon a large scale was impossible ; yet a strict discipline had always been enforced in the different detachments, and nothing was wanting to render the infantry as imposing a body of troops, for its number, as any in the world, except reunion in masses for a few weeks.

The rank and file contained many foreigners, but nearly all were from Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany, and the greater portion possessed the warlike nature of their native countries, with an attachment for the land of their adoption. But the mass of the troops was American ; and all banded together by a salutary discipline, well and regularly paid, well fed and clothed, every desirable condition of efficiency was satisfied in the physical state of the American regular army.

Under the spirit of retrenchment which pervaded the American Congress in 1842, the number of privates in the companies of dragoons had been reduced to fifty, and in those of artillery and infantry to forty-two, numbers far too small to keep those corps up to a proper numerical strength ; for the difficulty of supplying the remote posts with recruits was such that it was never practicable to keep the regiments more than two thirds full, according to the legal standard. The number of officers was sufficient for the command of companies of the full size, and, in the adoption of the skeleton system, it had been believed that they could be raised to that standard when the necessity be-

came apparent. Many officers were, however, superannuated, and unfit for service except in the ordinary duties of a garrison. This class was found, of course, among the higher grades, and there was hardly a regiment in service which could take the field with its full number of field officers. This evil had arisen from the want of a retired list; and as the different administrations of the government had not wished to take the alternative of forcing aged officers, whose life had been spent in the army, unprovided from the service, their duties had been performed by juniors, without either the proper rank or pay of their commands, although most of the seniors, with the customary pertinacity of old soldiers, even when their incapacity was notorious, insisted that they, and they alone, possessed the skill and experience necessary for high command.

The general officers were also advanced in years, and many of them too much so to be useful. But few retained the ardent enthusiasm which creates resources where there are none, and, when combined with warlike genius and sound judgment, accomplishes deeds looked upon as impracticable. Such never has been the attribute of aged generals, and the Mexican war furnishes hardly an exception to the rule.

The want of vacancies had induced the government of the United States to introduce into the service the pernicious system of brevetting officers to higher grades than they held in the line of the army, and their desire to exercise the command of

their brevet rank had often led to disputes beneficial neither to the service nor themselves. From Corpus Christi, a petition was sent to the government in 1845, praying that the powers and privileges of brevet rank might be strictly defined, and the question was decided. By the decision, brevet rank conferred no authority except upon special assignment, or upon detachments specially sent out. This decision was in opposition to the views of the general-in-chief, who supported brevet rank as being, in the main, real rank, and gave offense to many holding such commissions in the army. One general officer was so much aggrieved that he threw up his commission, and for a time left the service.

But, at the close of the year 1845, the whole number of bayonets and sabers allowed by the organization of the army was but 7883; and, according to the return of the army for November of that year,* but 5304, including sergeants and corporals, were present throughout the country. General Taylor was then at Corpus Christi, and the strength of his command, including sick, was but 3593; and during the winter this number was much reduced by ordinary casualties and expiration of service, and hardly amounted, when he arrived opposite Matamoros, to 3000 men of all arms—too small a force for the position and circumstances—and this the Mexican authorities knew to be the greater portion of the American army.

* Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 221.

Mexico did not count upon, nor could any one unacquainted with the American people have counted upon, the ease and celerity with which any required number of volunteers can be called into the field. In great measure, each man in the United States considers that he has a direct interest in the government, and feels bound to support it in a foreign war. It is a point of honor for each state and county to furnish promptly the requisitions made upon it; and, upon the call of the government, it is often the dispute for the privilege of serving rather than for exemption from the fatigues and dangers of the duty. Party strife, which is so prevalent, takes the form of emulation, for military service is that which appears more distinctly patriotic than any other, and it is the interest of politicians to give their support in actual service, however much they may oppose the policy of the administration.

Volunteer troops are necessarily undisciplined, and, at the commencement of their military career, are but little better than when they practice to display their ignorance at militia musters and independent company parades. But nearly every man is acquainted with the use of arms in his own way; and if the officers are well selected, and have perseverance enough to learn their duties, with independence enough to execute them, volunteer regiments soon improve, and the infantry becomes highly efficient. With the cavalry it is a different matter, whenever it is attempted to use it as cav-

I.—G

alry proper, for it requires more time than can be given by volunteer troops to acquire the knowledge and practice the duties of that arm ; and, variously equipped and mounted as they are upon entering the service, the experiment of making a respectable dragoon out of a volunteer must almost necessarily fail. One species of mounted force, peculiar to the western frontier of the United States, is, however, efficient. The inhabitants of that frontier, from their vicinity to hostile Indians, are well practiced in partisan warfare, and, although they will not easily submit to discipline, yet take the field in rough, uncouth habiliments, and, following some leader chosen for his talent and bravery, perform partisan duties in a manner hardly to be surpassed. Their actual services on the field are generally those of light infantry and riflemen ; for, although mounted, of the duties of a dragoon as such they know nothing, and almost invariably dismount and act upon foot.

The greatest objection to a volunteer force is to be found in the ignorance of the officers of the line, and especially of the staff, in administrative duties. Besides the want of discipline, which is a necessary consequence, this renders such a force wastefully extravagant and expensive until experience has taught the rules and routine of service. The system of electing officers is also bad, for it can hardly be supposed that good military selections should be generally made by men entirely ignorant of the duties of the office. All these difficulties, howev-

er, have been overlooked in the adoption of the policy of the country, and utterly forgotten in the good conduct which, on many occasions, volunteer troops have displayed.

The navy of the United States, like the army, was not in proportion with the size and power of the nation, although the disparity was not so marked. It was sufficiently large, however, to blockade completely every port of Mexico, and in efficiency and discipline the American navy was considered a model.

Though immediately deficient in numerical military strength, the United States were, nevertheless, most powerful in all other things which make a nation formidable in war. In variety and extent of their climate, of resources, of revenue, in the nature of their people, in the ingenuity and industry of their mechanics, in the immense agricultural products of their soil, in facilities for internal communication, in their large commercial marine, and, in greater degree than in all others, in the moral power and national pride with which a free government endows its citizens, would be found the elements of warlike strength, even had they not one armed man in service, or a single vessel in commission; certainly when placed in comparison with Mexico, deficient as the latter was, and is still, in most of these results of continued prosperity.

CHAPTER II.

Movement from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande—Passage of the Colorado—Arrival of American Army opposite Matamoras—Interview between Generals Worth and La Vega—Mexican Action—Commencement of Fortifications—Arrival of General Ampudia—Correspondence with General Taylor—Blockade of the Mouth of the Rio Grande—Arrival of General Arista—Commencement of Hostilities—Capture of Thornton's Squadron—Call for Volunteers—March to Point Isabel—Mexican Passage of the Rio Grande—Bombardment of Fort Brown—Battle of Palo Alto—Battle of Resaca da la Palma—Expedition against Burita—American Passage of the Rio Grande—Observations.

ON the 8th of March, 1846, General Taylor broke up his camp at Corpus Christi, and commenced his march to take position on the left bank of the Rio Grande, opposite Matamoras. He had already determined upon Point Isabel as his depôt, and to that point the greater part of his stores were sent by sea. The last detachment of the little army marched from Corpus Christi on the 11th of March, with which was the commander. Taylor, however, passed rapidly to the front, and took the advance.*

The first demonstration of Mexican hostility was met at the passage of the Arroyo Colorado, a point some thirty miles north of Matamoras. On the 19th, the American advance encamped within

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, March 11, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 121.

three miles of the ford, and reconnoitering officers were sent forward to examine it. A party of Mexican rancheros occupied the right bank of the stream ; but, although it was signified to the American officers that any attempt to pass would be considered an act of hostility, and would be resisted, yet no obstacle was thrown in the way of the reconnaissance. In consequence of the Mexican threats, Taylor made his dispositions to force the passage, and early on the morning of the 20th, the cavalry and Worth's brigade of infantry were in position at the ford, with two batteries of field artillery planted to sweep the opposite bank. A shrill blast of trumpets was sounded on the right bank of the stream, and the same party which had been met the previous day made its appearance. The officer in command informed Captain Mansfield, who was sent to communicate with him, that he had positive orders to open fire upon the American troops should they attempt the passage. Another, represented as a staff officer of the Mexican general Mejia, then in command at Matamoras, crossed to the left bank, and delivered a message of a similar nature to General Taylor. He placed in the hands of the American general a proclamation of Mejia, issued on the 18th, in which hostility to the United States was advocated, and the people of the country called to arms. In the face of threats and proclamation, Taylor informed the Mexican staff officer of his intention to cross, and warned him of the consequences of resistance.

Four light companies under Captain C. F. Smith, constituting the American advance, were ordered forward, and, as they moved into the stream, Worth and his staff dashed past and crossed at their head. The resistance which had been so vauntingly threatened by the continued blasts of the trumpets proved to be nothing, for no other force of Mexican troops was found in the vicinity than that which had before been seen, and it, such as it was, made a precipitate retreat to Matamoras.*

Having remained near the Colorado until the 23d, awaiting the arrival of his supply train, on that day Taylor advanced. On the 24th the army was halted within eleven miles of Matamoras, while the general proceeded with an empty train and an escort of cavalry to Point Isabel, to communicate with his transports and to establish his dépôt. When near that place he was met by a deputation, and presented with a formal protest against American occupation of the country from the prefect of the northern district of Tamaulipas. But, at the moment of receiving it, the buildings of the village at the Point were discovered to be on fire, and deeming this fact to be a demonstration of hostility, the general pushed on with his escort, while the deputation was hastily informed that the protest would be answered from a point opposite Matamoras.†

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, March 21, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 123.

† Idem, March 25. Idem, p. 129.

The buildings, which were of little value, were consumed by the time of the arrival of the American party, and the incendiaries had effected their escape. The transports, however, entered the port at the moment, and, having made some arrangements for the defense of the depôt, and laden his train with supplies, the general returned to his army. On the 28th he sat down opposite Matamoros, without any attempt at retaliating hostility, although two American dragoons had been seized and carried across the river by the Mexicans.*

An immediate attempt was made to communicate with General Mejia, and, for the purpose, General Worth and staff crossed the river. Mejia refused to hold personal communication with any other American officer than General Taylor, but sent his second in command, General de la Vega, to confer with Worth. An interview of some length took place. The Mexican officer received the communications borne by Worth for Mejia, the authorities of Matamoros, and the American consul, but would allow no personal communication with the latter. Some discussion of the annexation of Texas and the American occupation of the left bank of the Rio Grande was commenced by De la Vega, but soon put a stop to by Worth, whose character and temper were not at all suited by the discussion in words of such a question, at that time and place,

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, March 29, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 132.

especially when he had just been refused an audience with the consul of his nation. The interview ended in nothing but in a confirmation of the belief in Mexican hostility.*

In the existence of this state of things, General Taylor determined to fortify himself; and his engineer officers were employed for several days in reconnoitering the banks of the river, and selecting the site for a field-work. The Mexican general commenced his works on the right bank immediately, and, although he made no hostile movement, he kept up great displays of his force. In the dispatches which he sent daily to the government of Mexico, the force and condition of the American army were absurdly underrated. As Mejia was soon to be superseded, he could in safety indulge in anticipations of success; and, meanwhile, as he could give no evidence of military prowess, he chose to congratulate himself on his diplomatic talent and good management in sowing discord among the American officers.† As the basis of this good opinion of himself, Mejia alluded to the resignation of General Worth, which took place about that time, not caused, however, by any instrumentality of the Mexican general, as he well knew, but on account of the decision of the president in relation to brevet rank, which just then was received in the American camp.

* Minutes of Interview. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 134.

† Mexican Official Correspondence.

The American fort was commenced on the 5th of April, and from that time the army was constantly employed to its completion. General Ampudia arrived at Matamoras on the 11th, and immediately assumed command of the Mexican forces. His division, some three thousand strong, arrived on the 12th. The forces under his command amounted to over six thousand bayonets and lances, and, like Mejia, he assumed a hostile attitude. True to the customs of his country, he commenced operations on paper, and the demonstrations of this character were, as usual, more vigorous than any which he could actually put forth in reality. On the 12th, General Taylor was required, in peremptory terms, to break up his camp within twenty-four hours, and retire beyond the Nueces until the question of boundaries should be settled, and war was threatened as the immediate alternative. The answer to this demand was mild but firm, and the American general declined complying with it, as he was there in a military capacity, and without authority in relation to the question of boundary.*

Both armies continued at work upon their fortifications, and Ampudia made no immediate attempt to enforce his threatened alternative. But, as a measure of precaution, and for the purpose of demonstrating that the existing state of quasi hostility would not be without inconvenience to the

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, April 12, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 139.

Mexican commander, General Taylor caused the mouth of the Rio Grande to be blockaded by the small naval force which had accompanied his transports from Corpus Christi. In consequence of this, two vessels, laden with provisions for the Mexican army, were warned off, and returned to sea. Notwithstanding his declaration of hostile purposes, General Ampudia protested against the blockade, and with a short but unfortunate argument on the law of nations, demanded that the vessels which he supposed had been seized, should be restored, with their cargoes, to the owners, and allowed to enter the river. Although the argument and demand were treated with some attention in the answer of General Taylor, yet he refused to raise the blockade, and affairs continued in this state for several subsequent weeks.*

On the 10th of April, Colonel Cross, assistant quarter-master general of the American army, was murdered at some distance from the camp by a roving party of banditti. In the subsequent search for him, a party of the fourth infantry, under command of Lieutenant Porter, fell in with and drove a body of Mexicans, taking possession of their camp and horses. On the return to camp, the party was ambuscaded and dispersed, the officer and one man having been killed.

Arista, the general in chief of the Mexican army

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, April 23, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 142-147

of the North, assumed command of the forces in Matamoras on the 24th of April. With him arrived a large re-enforcement, and he immediately announced to General Taylor that he considered hostilities as having commenced, and that he should prosecute them. In the pursuit of his intention, he at once sent General Torrejon, with a force some 2500 strong, across the river, some miles above the American position. Rumors of this movement reached Taylor on the 25th, and a squadron of dragoons, under Captain Thornton, was sent out on that day to obtain certain information of the number and character of the enemy.*

Thornton proceeded some sixteen miles up the river ; but, although he received certain information that the enemy had crossed, yet he could gain nothing reliable in regard to the number or description of his force. His guide refused to proceed further ; but Thornton, in his anxiety to execute his orders, determined to proceed, though the nature of the country rendered the operations of cavalry extremely hazardous.

Some three miles in advance he arrived at a rancho, and entered the surrounding corral with the advanced guard. The squadron followed after while Thornton was questioning a Mexican, and hardly had the rearmost files entered when the alarm was given. The squadron was in confusion ;

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, April 26, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 288.

but Thornton, taking the lead, dashed at once at the only opening of the inclosure. That was already shut and defended by a large body of Mexicans, and the passage was impracticable. In searching for a passage to the right the dragoons encountered a galling fire, which increased the confusion, and Thornton's horse falling wounded upon his rider, the whole party gave back to the center of the corral. Captain Hardee, who succeeded to the command, rallied the men, and, after a vain endeavor to find an opening, surrendered. In this affair Lieutenant Mason had been killed, and sixteen non-commissioned officers and men had fallen dead or wounded.*

Hostilities having been thus positively commenced, and General Taylor made aware of his situation, he was at liberty, in the absence of any prospect of peace, to throw off his purely defensive policy. The state of things which had existed since the 28th of March was at an end, and he not only contemplated beating the enemy to his own bank of the river, but intended to carry the war as soon as possible into his territory. For this purpose, on the 26th of April he addressed calls to the Governors of Louisiana and Texas for an auxiliary force of five thousand volunteers.†

The Mexican troops continued their partisan

* Proceedings of the Court Martial. Reports of Captains Thornton and Hardee, and Captain Thornton's Defense.

† Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, April 26, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 288.

operations, and on the morning of the 28th fell in with a small party of Texan Rangers, posted midway between Matamoras and Point Isabel, of which nine were killed and taken prisoners. The main efforts of both armies, however, were put forth to finish their different works, and on the 30th of April the American fort was in fair defensive condition. The plan of immediate operations was meanwhile considered by General Taylor, and although he was strongly inclined to move at once in pursuit of the enemy, and beat the force which had crossed at once over the river, yet more defensive measures were recommended by his elder officers. The defensive policy prevailed for a time longer, and the enemy was allowed to cross, with any force, at his leisure, if he chose to do so. It was, however, necessary to communicate with Point Isabel, which depôt was weakly defended. Such communication was hazardous for any small body of troops, and impracticable for a train under any ordinary escort. On the 30th the general took the resolution to leave the fort garrisoned by two companies of artillery and the seventh regiment of infantry, while he moved the main body of his army in escort of the train to Point Isabel, and opened the communication. Accordingly, the garrison at once took post in the works, and all the stores of the army were moved within them. Every preparation which time would admit was made to enable the garrison to stand a siege, and at four o'clock on the afternoon of the 1st of May the main body of the

army made a forced march in the direction of Point Isabel. It arrived there on the following day at noon, having met no hinderance from the enemy.

During the interval between Thornton's capture and the march to Point Isabel, Torrejon's command had turned the American position, and occupied the left bank of the Rio Grande, some miles below Matamoras, in order to cover the passage of the river by the main Mexican army. Of this a large portion crossed on the 1st of May, with the avowed intention of intercepting, what was called by the Mexican officers the American retreat.* But this stroke of military action was not attempted, on account of the alleged want of time, and the bulletins from Matamoras contained loud complaints of the conduct of General Taylor in avoiding a battle by the celerity of his flight.

The town of Matamoras is situated about one thousand yards from the southern bank of the Rio Grande. The course of the stream in the vicinity is, as throughout its extent, exceedingly tortuous and rapid to a degree. The usual points of passage from the Texas shore had been, before American occupation, at two ferries, of which the upper was nearly opposite the west of the town. The lower, which was less used, was at a distance and below the city.

The Mexican works were in general a line of detached batteries between the two. The most considerable of their forts was a pentagonal redoubt

* Mexican bulletins published at Matamoras.

of considerable capacity and relief, called Fort Paredes, at the upper ferry. The other fortifications were open in the rear, and constructed with a view to prevent the direct passage of the river and to annoy the American works. Those directly opposite to them were armed with guns of different calibers, and the lower batteries with howitzers and mortars, but none of them were heavy.

The Americans had constructed various traverses and intrenchments before the site for the principal work had been selected, but they were of no use, and the main work was the only one relied upon. It was opposite Matamoras, some fifteen hundred yards or more east of Fort Paredes, and within good eighteen pound range of the right bank of the Rio Grande. The work was a pentagon, with bastioned fronts, having the southern fronts of greater length than the others, and was of capacity to receive a garrison of the whole strength of the army. But all left in it, including ineffectives, did not number over five hundred. The armament was of four eighteen pounders, and a field battery of four light sixes.

The ground about the fort was generally level and clear for much distance, except toward the rear. In that direction, within one thousand yards, were various clumps of shrubbery, and a cluster of Mexican huts, called by General Arista, in his dispatches, the "Fanques del Raminero." They were upon the road from Point Isabel to the upper ferry at Matamoras.

Arista commenced his operations against the garrison of the American fort on the 3d of May. Early on the morning of that day seven guns opened from the Mexican batteries on the right bank of the Rio Grande, to which the Americans replied with their eighteen pounders and the guns of Bragg's light field battery. The latter produced little or no effect, for the range was too great, and their fire was soon suspended; but the eighteen pounders told well, and in the course of thirty minutes dismounted two Mexican guns. Upon this the enemy ceased his direct fire, and commenced a bombardment from his lower battery, which, with some intermissions, was kept up throughout the day. It had, however, little other effect than annoyance upon the garrison, for the shells were of brass, of small caliber, and the explosions, although many fell inside the works, were by no means destructive. While the bombardment continued the American guns were turned upon the town of Matamoras, though also without positive effect, for this range was too great even for the eighteen pounders, and the hot shot were harmless. From the nature of Mexican buildings, the town could not be fired, and, a few bullets having been expended in the attempt, the American guns ceased altogether.

On the 4th the Mexicans continued the vertical fire, but, as on the preceding day, it was harmless. The bulletins from Matamoras, however, announced, as the result of the cannonade of the 3d, a complete success. It was said that the American

works were entirely destroyed, and that nothing was required except to take possession of the ruins. This, it was stated, was to be accomplished by the troops under command of General Canales. Notwithstanding the bold assertions put forth in the bulletins, Canales entertained very different views, and soon after wrote to the publisher, expressing the hope that in his future accounts he would confine himself to the truth; that the works were still exceedingly strong, and that he had no such assault as had been represented in contemplation.*

The main Mexican army, having crossed the Rio Grande, remained in camp, awaiting the movements of General Taylor, and meanwhile Arista's efforts were continued against the American works. A reconnaissance was made by Mexican officers about nine o'clock on the morning of the 5th, from the north of the position, and during that day and night a mortar battery was constructed beyond the huts of the "Fanques del Raminero." On the morning of the 6th, this, together with the mortar and howitzer batteries on the right bank of the Rio Grande, opened and kept up a desultory fire. The first serious loss to the American garrison was the result, for Major Brown, its gallant commander, was mortally wounded. The fort, which was the scene of his devotion and his death, was subsequently named in his honor; and, although not known by the name of Fort Brown during the

* Mexican bulletins published at Matamoras.

operations immediately succeeding, yet it may be permitted so to call it in the continuation of the narrative.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the 6th Arista moved his troops forward, demonstrating an assault upon the northern fronts of the fort; but the works in that quarter had been entirely finished on the previous evening. The demonstration of attack brought the Mexican troops within range of the six pounders, which were opened with such positive effect as to change the intention of assault, if, indeed, such had been seriously entertained. Whether it had been or not, the speedy retreat of his troops so incensed Arista that he showered a continued stream of shells upon the works for an hour and a half. But his fire produced no great damage; and when he summoned the garrison in the afternoon of the day, every American officer was in favor of continuing the resistance. A positive refusal was, in consequence, returned to the summons, and immediately after its receipt by the Mexican commander all his batteries recommenced the fire. It was kept up continually until night-fall, but, as before, it did little positive damage.

The Mexican fire was renewed and continued throughout the 7th, wounding a sentinel and killing one of the artillery horses. The garrison, as during the greater part of the cannonade, kept perfectly quiet, in readiness for an assault, should one be attempted by the enemy. Toward evening a party made a sortie from the works, and leveled a

traverse thrown up at the position of the former American camp, near the river, as it afforded protection to small parties of Mexicans, which, creeping up under the banks of the river, took position under the traverse, and delivered thence an annoying fire.

The same desultory and annoying, although ineffectual practice, was continued by the Mexicans throughout the 8th and 9th, but nothing more positive was attempted against Fort Brown.*

Meanwhile General Taylor was at Point Isabel, completing the defenses of that depôt, which he had found in an unfinished state, and obtaining additional supplies and munitions preparatory to his return. He had communicated with Fort Brown on the 4th, through Captain Walker, of the Texan Rangers, and the answer received during the night of the 5th assured him of the safety of the garrison. The subsequent continued firing told that it still held out, and it was not until all his arrangements were completed, on the evening of the 7th, that he commenced his march from Point Isabel.† His numerical force had been in no way increased; for, although several bodies of recruits had arrived, they were in no greater strength than was necessary to complete the garrison of Point Isabel, with the addition of a body of marines and sailors which subsequently arrived. The column was accom-

* Reports of Major Hawkins.

† Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, May 5th and 7th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 292, 293.

panied by a train of three hundred wagons, laden with subsistence and munitions. Six twelve pounders, intended to increase the armament of Fort Brown, were packed in the wagons, and two eighteens, intended for the same object, being mounted, were an addition to the effective American artillery.

Hearing of General Taylor's movement, on the morning of the 8th General Arista broke up his head-quarters at the "Fanques del Raminero," with the determination of disputing the communication with Fort Brown. The reputation which the Americans enjoyed as skirmishers and in forest warfare, with the justice of which the Mexicans had become impressed in the course of their Texan operations, induced Arista to believe that they were only formidable as such, and that Taylor would be easily crushed by his overwhelming force in a conflict in the open field. His troops were some of the best in Mexico, well equipped and fairly disciplined. Leaving Ampudia for a time, to make arrangements for the continued blockade and bombardment of Fort Brown, he moved with his main force to Palo Alto, some nine miles from Matamoras, where he took up his position for battle.*

The Mexican left was composed of the regular cavalry, which occupied the road, and rested upon a thicket of chaparral, while the infantry in line, with the artillery, twelve pieces in number, posted in the intervals, extended across the prairie. On

* Arista's Official Correspondence.



**BATTLE OF
PALO ALTO.**

May 8th 1846.



its right was formed the rancho cavalry, being within a short distance of the chaparral south of the road. The Mexican reserves were some distance to the rear, behind an intervening thicket. General Arista has stated that his force numbered three thousand men of all arms; but this was evidently erroneous. The line, as he occupied it, could not have been covered by less than six thousand; and, in addition to this force, he had his reserves.

On the morning of the 8th, it was a matter of some doubt with the American general whether his march would be opposed, for his scouts had been in advance, to a position on which the Mexican troops had been encamped some days previous, without meeting an enemy; but at twelve o'clock his advanced guard came in sight of the enemy's line, and preparations were at once made for battle. The column was halted, and after a short rest, in which the soldiers filled their canteens, Taylor formed his line and advanced, leaving his train parked under guard of a squadron of dragoons. The fifth regiment of infantry was on the right of his line, and, with Ringgold's light battery, the third regiment of infantry, Churchill's eighteen pounders, and the fourth regiment of infantry, constituted the right wing, under Colonel Twiggs. The left was the first brigade, under Lieutenant-colonel Belknap, consisting of a battalion of artillery serving as infantry, Duncan's light battery, and the eighth regiment of infantry.

At two o'clock the line moved in advance by the heads of regiments. Before it came within range of the Mexican positions, a single horseman, Lieutenant Blake, of the Topographical Corps, galloped rapidly to the front, without drawing rein until within close vicinity of the enemy. Dismounting, he commenced his reconnaissance; but, as two Mexican officers rode out to receive him, Blake remounted his horse, and, after having ridden along the extended Mexican front, returned with an accurate report of the numbers and artillery of the enemy.

As the American troops came within seven hundred yards of the enemy's line, his artillery opened from the right, and, in quick succession, all his batteries took up and continued the fire. Taylor halted, at once advanced all his artillery, and replied. The American guns soon told with deadly effect upon the masses of the enemy; but the intervals were closed up as soon as they were made, and the Mexican soldiers stood their ground manfully. Their artillery was directed against the American guns; for the infantry, although in supporting distance, was kept as far as possible out of range. Against guns alone the Mexican artillery fire was ineffectual, compared with that of the American light pieces, and, after having suffered the cannonade for more than an hour, Arista commenced maneuvering for the victory. He first sent Torrejon's cavalry, with a support of infantry and two guns, to turn and attack the

American right. The cavalry moved at once ; but it had been much cut up by the fire of Ringgold's battery ; and being still under it and that of the eighteen pounders, its pace was increased to a gallop, until, in some confusion, it disappeared from view behind the chaparral. To oppose the movement, Taylor sent the fifth regiment to the right, where it took post in square, upon the edge of the thicket, having a narrow lagoon immediately between it and the enemy. Torrejon turned the lagoon, and, coming up from the right and rear, approached within short musket range. His troopers, unslinging their escopetas, commenced a noisy fire, which wounded two men of the square ; but, on a closer approach, one front of it delivered so effective a volley, that, with twenty empty saddles, the whole mass of cavalry gave back. A portion passed to the rear in the direction of the train, with the apparent intention of cutting it up. To oppose it, Colonel Twiggs sent the third regiment of infantry, and, as it approached, the cavalry gave it up, and retired beyond range. The Mexican artillery, which had advanced to the further bank of the lagoon, to within easy range of the fifth regiment, had not unlimbered, when Lieutenant Ridgely, coming forward at a gallop with two of Ringgold's guns, threw them promptly into battery, and poured in such a shower of canister that the enemy withdrew at once without firing a shot.

While these movements and operations were

progressing, the cannonade between the main armies had continued, and the Mexican masses were still suffering severely ; for Arista kept his infantry close to his guns, and, in consequence, the American artillery was turned in greater part upon it. But, though wasted by every discharge, his men held their ground with obstinacy, and, for a time, showed no sign of fear or retreat.

During the action the dry grass of the prairie took fire, and, under a gentle breeze, the sheet of flame rolled away to the American left, partially concealing the armies from each other, and interfering with the aim of the artillery. The firing slackened, and meantime Arista drew back his left wing, which had suffered most, and reformed his whole line in front of the chaparral, changing front to the left. Taylor made a corresponding change, and advanced his eighteen pounders with the fifth regiment near to the position which Torrejon's cavalry had occupied at the commencement of the action. Ringgold's and Duncan's guns, with their supporting infantry, also advanced, and when, after an hour's cessation, the cannonade was steadily resumed, the Mexican ranks were again mowed down by their sweeping fire.

The Mexican soldiers had stood their ground so far with a constancy worthy a better fate ; but, under the continued destruction, many became restive, and impatiently demanded to be led against their enemy, or to be allowed to fall back.* Yielding

* Arista's Official Report.

to their importunities, Arista moved his whole right wing to turn the American left, under cover of the smoke and flame which rose from the burning prairie, ordered two squadrons of cavalry and a strong battalion of infantry from the reserve for the same purpose, and sent a body of cavalry against the American right.* His troops had hardly got in motion when Duncan caught a glimpse of them through the smoke, and seeing at once the necessity of opposing the movement, he reported it to Belknap. With Belknap's consent, without waiting for support, he moved the two sections of his battery in succession, at a gallop, to the left. His guns came round the cloud of fire which had hidden his movement with a celerity which astonished the Mexicans. The cavalry which formed their right pulled up at once in apparent amazement, but the corps from the reserve debouched from the chaparral, and moved steadily down upon Duncan's left. One section of the battery opened upon this attack, while with the other he cannonaded the force in his front, which meantime remained in unaccountable inactivity. Ker's squadron of dragoons and the eighth regiment of infantry had hastened to the support of the battery, but before they came within supporting distance the Mexican attacking column had fallen back under the steady fire of two guns. The main body, however, held its ground, though inactive, and the beaten force, having been rallied, advanced again. It soon gave way a second time,

* Arista's Official Report.

and commenced its flight in earnest. The whole battery was then turned upon the mass in front, which stood for a time ; but much cut up, squadron after squadron took the panic, the cavalry fell back upon the infantry, and the whole fled out of range.*

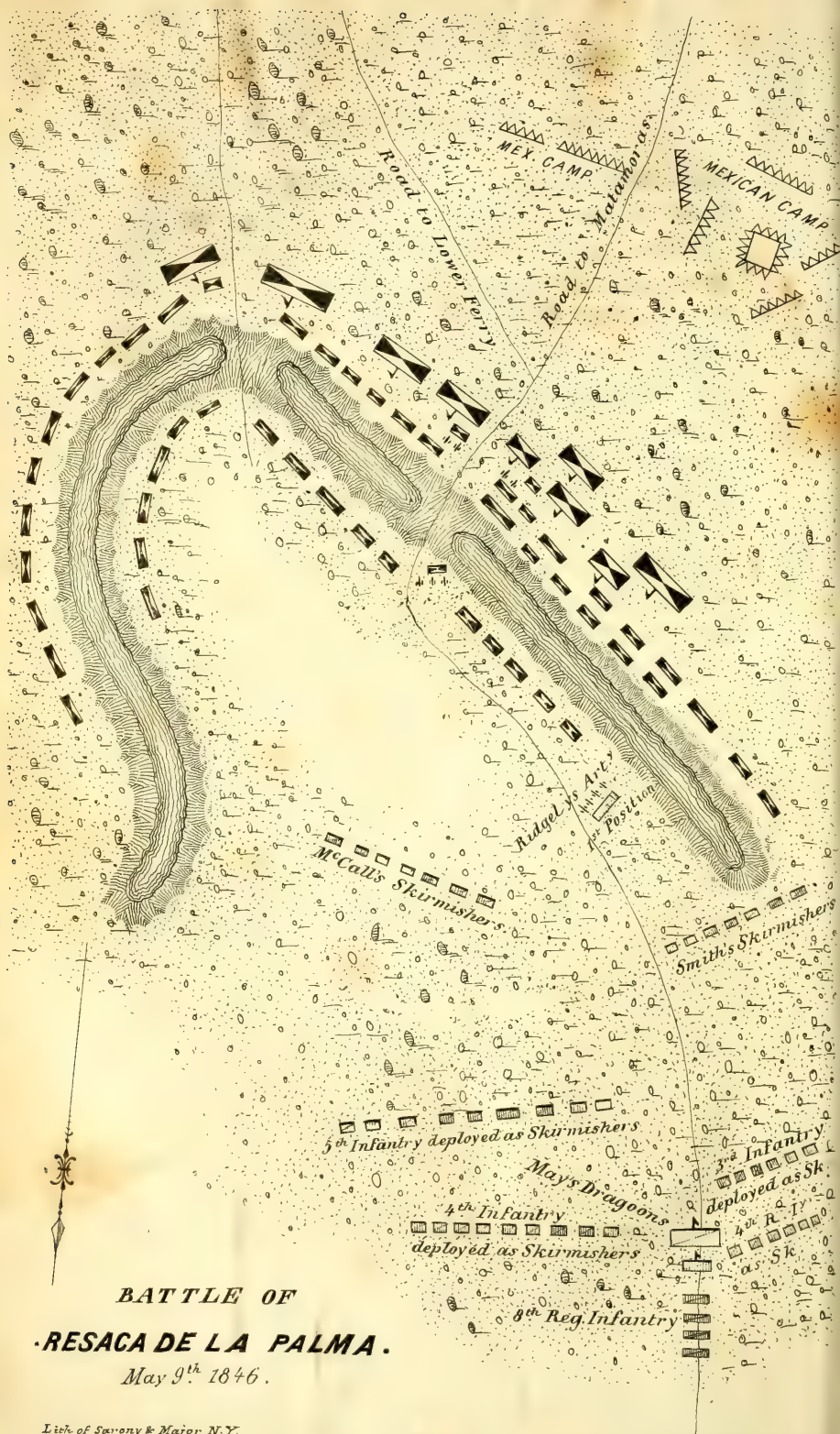
Upon the American right the enemy had advanced a corps of his cavalry in the while, which persisted in its movements until within grape range of the eighteen pounders. A close discharge dispersed the mass ; but scattered parties advanced and opened fire upon the artillery battalion, which, formed in square, supported the guns. A volley from one front of the square silenced their fire and finished the battle of Palo Alto. By this time it was quite dark, and further operations were discontinued on either side.

The American force engaged on this day amounted to 2111 sabers and bayonets, and ten guns. Its loss in the battle was nine killed and forty-seven wounded. Of the latter class, three were commissioned officers, and two had mortal wounds.† One was Major Ringgold, much distinguished as an artillery officer, and a favorite with the country ; the other, also distinguished and beloved among his comrades, was Captain Page, of the fourth infantry. Victims in the first positive action of the Mexican war, their services have been remembered, and their names, from the first, cherished in the memory of their countrymen.

* Official Reports of Lieutenant-colonel Belknap, Captain Duncan, and General Taylor.

† Official Returns.





The loss of the Mexican army on this field was officially stated as being, in all, 252 ;* but, from the known effect of the American artillery, and the masses of slain which encumbered the field, it is probable that the loss was much greater. If the return of killed and wounded was in the same ratio with the Mexican field report, it must have been at least double the stated number.

During the night both armies remained upon and near the field of battle. The result of the action had, however, changed the opinion of the Mexican general in regard to the capacity of the American troops for battle in the open field, and, in the continuation of the conflict, he determined to avail himself of an advantageous defensive position.† Wherefore, collecting his scattered forces during the night, at early dawn on the morning of the 9th he moved in retreat to the position of Resaca de la Palma.

The American general had not anticipated this movement of the enemy, and although his troops were drawn out for action so soon as it was observed that he was in motion, yet no attempt was made to improve the opportunity for a close pursuit.‡ It was even a question whether a forward movement should be made, and for obtaining an expression of opinion a meeting of the senior officers of brigades and regiments was called. It is an old

* Arista's Official Report.

† General Arista speaks of it as the American superiority in artillery.—*Official Report.*

‡ Campaign Sketches of Captain Henry, p. 94.

remark among military men, "that a council of war never fights." Experience has shown that this is generally true, and in this case, had it been left to the decision of the majority, the rule would have been verified. Most of the officers, with a prudence which was hardly prudent in the state of affairs which existed, and since operations had been commenced, advised defensive measures. Some proposed that the army should intrench in position; others, that it should retire to Point Isabel, to await the arrival of strong re-enforcements, and, in support of the advised delay, the remark was made that the army then present could not be expected to fight the whole strength of Mexico. There was some foundation, apparently, for their views, in the immense disparity of force; but, although General Taylor had called the meeting, he did not coincide in opinion with the greater portion of his officers. Two officers, Lieutenant-colonel Belknap and Captain Duncan (who had come unbidden to the meeting, and supported his views with strong arguments and bold determination), advised the advance, and when the meeting broke up, General Taylor ordered preparations to be made for the march.

The train was parked on the field of Palo Alto, the first brigade, with the two eighteen pounders and two twelves (newly mounted), was stationed for its defense, and the wounded of the action of the 8th were sent under an escort of cavalry to Point Isabel.

At one o'clock the army again advanced in the direction of Fort Brown, preceded by a picked corps of two hundred and twenty skirmishers, under Captains M'Call and C. F. Smith, accompanied by Walker's Rangers and a small party of dragoons. This advanced guard, disposed on either side of the road, and following the route of the Mexican army, beat through the chaparral which covered the ground in front of Resaca de la Palma, meeting with but few of the enemy until it entered an open space immediately in front of the ravine. A shot from a battery posted to defend the passage induced a halt, and it becoming evident from a short reconnaissance that the enemy was in force, the arrival of General Taylor was awaited. On coming up, he ordered Captain M'Call to bring on the action and ascertain the position of the enemy, and the skirmishers advanced.

Arista had been re-enforced during the morning by near two thousand infantry and a strong body of cavalry. His infantry occupied the northern crest of Resaca de la Palma, which ravine is crossed by the main road from Point Isabel to Matamoras at a point some four miles from the latter place. The general outline of the ravine is an irregular curve, of which the convexity is given to the south. The road running toward the south crosses the ravine about the center of its length. Three guns on the northern crest defended the point of passage, and two on each side of the road south of the ravine supported the first battery with a flank and

cross fire. Along the southern crest was posted a second line of infantry, and the cavalry, which were necessarily unable to act, was in strong masses to the rear. The position and disposition of the Mexican forces were exceedingly strong against an enemy advancing by the road, and the thick growth of chaparral rendered such an advance the one most probable, if not absolutely necessary. But the same cause rendered a complete view of the operations impracticable, and made any action at the point one of detail on both sides, with the advantage, however, of a knowledge of locality on the part of the Mexicans not possessed by their enemy.

M'Call's and Smith's skirmishers pressed forward on the left and right, driving the Mexican troops of the first line from their positions at the northern extremities of the ravine. Ridgely's guns were planted at a point on the right of the path, within three hundred yards of the Mexican artillery, and thence opened a lively fire; it was briskly returned from the Mexican advanced battery; but the chaparral prevented accurate aim and the consequent full effect of artillery on either side. The fifth regiment and the left wing of the fourth, deployed as skirmishers, were sent into action on the left, while the third, with the right wing, displayed on the right, and supported the advanced parties: these troops pressed on through the thicket, and the action became general. The nature of the ground prevented the use of any other artillery than Ridgely's battery; there was no position in which a

line could be arrayed, nor was it attempted. The enemy's shot fell thick and fast from his positions on the crest of the ravine, and each captain and subaltern led his command as an independent body. All was apparently in confusion; but, confident in the courage and discipline of those around them, there was a general harmony in the attack; none thought of retreat; and, with loud shouts, each small party of the American troops pressed vigorously forward, and the fire of small arms was incessant. While the action continued in this manner, the Mexican artillery continued its fire upon the advancing American troops, although that of the advanced battery had slackened under the quick discharges of Ridgely's guns. To finish the action as soon as possible by its capture, General Taylor sent Captain May's squadron of dragoons directly against it.* May started down the road at a gallop in obedience to his order, and pulling up for a moment as he passed Ridgely's position, the latter poured in a discharge of canister, which drew the Mexican fire in reply. May continued his course, and, though his command was in confusion, rode over the whole battery. The Mexican infantry, however, from the second line, drove him, and the six men whom he was able to rally from his whole squadron, back under a severe fire; but he carried with him General de la Vega, who had been entangled in the *melée* and taken prisoner.† Ridgely had, meanwhile, followed at a gallop and

* General Taylor's Official Report. † Captain May's Official Report.

unlimbered on the northern crest, ready to defend the position without infantry support; but, although much exposed, the fear of injuring the dragoons prevented his firing.

When the action had fairly commenced, General Taylor had sent orders to Lieutenant-colonel Belknap to advance one regiment from the guard of the train, and at this time he led the eighth infantry into action. Moving down the road in column at a charging pace, the eighth, joined by a portion of the fifth, which had beat through to the ravine on the left of the road, crossed the ravine, secured the guns, and, pushing into the chaparral, after a severe struggle drove the enemy from the vicinity.

The battle was won; but still, in small parties, the Mexicans disputed the American advance, until their last gun, which had been in position to their left, was captured, and their camp entered by the fourth infantry, and then the rout began.

Ker's squadron of dragoons, Duncan's and Ridgely's batteries, the artillery battalion, and the light companies under Captain C. F. Smith, were sent on the track of the fugitives. Following closely in pursuit, they dispersed the routed Mexican army, driving its broken masses into the chaparral and beyond the Rio Grande. As the advance of the pursuing forces came in sight of the Mexican batteries at Matamoras, these opened fire. The American guns of Fort Brown also commenced firing on the upper ferry, at which the fugitives were cross-

ing ; but night coming on, rendered it impossible to distinguish friend from foe, and the cannonade ceased on both sides. The pursuing forces occupied the former American camp on the banks of the Rio Grande, but for the night the main army remained on the field of battle.

The rout of the Mexicans was complete. Their artillery (eight pieces), with its equipment and ammunition, their camp and camp furniture, and five hundred pack-mules and saddles, remained in the hands of the victors. General Arista lost his personal baggage, plate, and public correspondence. The loss of his army, in killed and wounded, it was almost impossible to determine ; but it was certainly heavy, and the American general was not extravagant when he estimated it, in the two days' action, at over one thousand men.*

Of the Americans, thirty-nine were slain, including three subalterns of merit : Inge of the Dragoons, Cochrane of the fourth, and Chadbourne of the eighth infantry. Eighty-two were wounded, including two lieutenant colonels, two captains, and eight subalterns.†

On the following day the American army was engaged in burying the dead, and Arista, without further offensive demonstration, in collecting the fragments of his beaten forces. An exchange of prisoners took place on the 11th, by which Thornton's party was released, and returned to the American camp.

* General Taylor's Official Report.

† Official Return.

With a view of preparing for the passage of the Rio Grande and carrying the war into Mexican territory, on the 11th General Taylor repaired in person to Point Isabel, where re-enforcements had commenced arriving. To favor the passage of the stream by the main force, he arranged an expedition, in conjunction with the naval force which was then off Brazos Santiago, against the little village of Burita, some twenty miles below Matamoras, on the right bank of the river.* No opposition was made on the part of the Mexicans, and the hamlet, which was entirely worthless in itself, was taken possession of by the expedition. On the 14th the general returned to Fort Brown, taking with him two siege mortars, with their ammunition, and an increase of heavy ordnance stores. The 15th, 16th, and 17th were spent in making preparations and selecting points for the passage of the river. The notice of Arista being attracted by the American movements, on the 17th he sent General Requeña to propose an armistice until the boundaries of the two countries could be settled by negotiation. General Taylor at once rejected the offer, and on the following morning commenced the passage two miles above Matamoras.

Three batteries of field artillery and two eighteen pounders were posted on the left bank, to command and protect the passage, and the light companies

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, May 12th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 297.

of infantry and the cavalry were thrown across the stream as rapidly as the few boats which were in the possession of the army would transport them. But it was soon ascertained that the enemy had evacuated the town; and while the troops which had already passed the river moved down on the right bank and took possession of the Mexican works, the main body of the army returned to Fort Brown, and crossed at the upper ferry at leisure.*

Arista had left, early in the morning of the 18th, with the remnant of his army and eleven guns, having secreted and destroyed the remainder of the artillery which had been in battery around Matamoras. On the 19th Lieutenant-colonel Garland, with the whole mounted force of the American army, pursued, and, twenty-seven miles from the town, fell upon the Mexican rear guard, which was dispersed, with the loss of twenty men taken prisoners and a quantity of baggage. Garland's force was, however, too small for continued operations, and, having continued the pursuit for sixty miles, he returned;† and the short campaign of the Rio Grande was finished.

The position of the American army opposite Matamoras, in the face of a Mexican force of more

* Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General, May 18th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 297.

† Idem, May 24. Idem.

than three times its numerical strength, and in front of a town of several thousand inhabitants, can not fail, even now, to be regarded as critical. As a military position, it was false ; for not only was the enemy in overwhelming numbers, but he was in his own country, had good communication with the interior, and his vicinity was, to a degree, populated, and capable of supporting an army. The American army had a long and hazardous route of communication by land, which was, indeed, never relied on, was twenty-seven miles from its depôt, which was in an unfinished and almost defenseless condition, and the only communication with New Orleans, which was the true base of operations, was by the Gulf of Mexico. The advantages on the Mexican side were fully demonstrated by the concentration of a large army at Matamoras, before General Taylor deemed it necessary to call for a re-enforcement of a single man.

The march of the army from Corpus Christi must be regarded as an experiment on the part of the United States government at Washington, undertaken for the purpose of inducing Mexico to listen to the offer of negotiations made through Mr. Slidell, and of demonstrating to her the consequences of a refusal in the forcible seizure of the territory in dispute. Although the whole disposable force of the American regular army was made use of, yet the inadequacy of it to the effect desired appears to have been the subject of appre-

hension at Washington, from the letters of Mr. Marcy to General Taylor.* Indeed, it may well have been ; for, where forcible possession is to be taken of disputed territory, it is obvious that it should be done in great strength, otherwise the proceeding only invites resistance to what the enemy denominates injustice, with a prospect of success, especially where every advantage of position is with the enemy.

The reasons why General Taylor did not avail himself of the means placed at his disposal have been previously noticed. All of them had their rise in the military policy of the United States, in depending almost entirely upon a citizen soldiery. By the laws under which the President is empowered to call upon the militia, the term of service is fixed at three months ; and it was evidently a measure of bad policy on the part of General Taylor to call for volunteers for that short period upon a contingency which, however hazardous in case it arose, was certainly, at the time of his movement from Corpus Christi, exceedingly doubtful. As he did not call for them at the time, it was natural that he should have delayed the call, after his arrival opposite Matamoras, until the necessity became palpable, and the whole term of service could be employed with some prospect of advantage. In consequence, he found himself in a position which certainly was one of danger, and

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 196, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

which created, for the time, great anxiety for his safety in the United States.

Had the regular force of the United States been larger, the danger would not have been encountered; for the movement to the Rio Grande would have been made in such force, that Mexico, torn as she was by her domestic troubles, could never have assembled a body of troops so superior in number as that which Arista commanded. The immediate cause of the weakness of the American army is to be found in the reduction of 1842. Had the authorized number of privates in each company been one hundred instead of forty-two, the force under General Taylor's command opposite Matamoros would have been near seven thousand of all arms. With this number of American troops, the occupation of the disputed territory would have been positive, and no Mexican force which could be placed on the frontier would have dared to cross the border. If it had, the result would have been in no way problematical, and the anxiety, and confusion, and hurry of subsequent preparation would have been avoided.

The course of action to be adopted upon the commencement of hostilities, when the capture of Thornton's squadron demonstrated that they were inevitable, was not only of the greatest importance, but a matter upon which it may well have been difficult to decide.

It was that of the commencement of military operations, and, like all others, they depend for suc-

cess upon their commencement in a great degree. It was the commencement of the war, and the moral effect which success or defeat would exercise on either party was of the most vital moment. Unless General Taylor had been assured of success, his course of action would have been to have broken up his camp opposite Matamoras, abandoned his position, and withdrawn his army to Point Isabel; for it is an approved maxim in war, "that a battle should not be fought when the advantages which may be gained by a victory are less than the dangers to be apprehended from a defeat."* In this case, the advantages to be gained by a victory were the vindication of the position of the United States and the supremacy of moral power, which the victory would retain and increase, besides the safety of the army. The moral force of the victory was the greatest advantage to be hoped for in the commencement of a war, which, from the policy of the United States, was necessarily to be prosecuted in the main by new levies; for the example of his veteran comrade exercises a most beneficial influence on a recruit, and hastens the time when he, too, becomes a veteran.

The disadvantages to be apprehended in case of defeat were no less than the total destruction of the army, involving the loss of both positions at Point Isabel and Fort Brown, and the consequent loss of morale in the commencement of operations. In a war with so impressionable a people as the

* Napoleon's Maxims of War.

Mexicans, this must have been most disastrous in future conflict. Moreover, the annihilation of the main force of the American regular army would have gone far to increase the dependence of the United States upon a volunteer force, and to have deprived their future army of the proper elements of organization. Therefore, had General Taylor considered the result doubtful, he might well have secured the safety of his army and saved himself from the disasters of defeat by falling back with his whole force to Point Isabel. That he could have defended himself there, there can be no doubt; and for his operations, whatever they may have been, he would have had his whole force. His communication with New Orleans would have been direct, and, upon the arrival of re-enforcements, he could have taken the field in strength. A decided victory would have had the immediate result of that of Resaca, whether Fort Brown was occupied or not; and the Mexican army, if beaten, must have retired beyond the Rio Grande, for the reason that the country on the east of it was comparatively a desert.

That General Taylor had at first no doubt of the result of the action, is evident from his letters announcing his call for volunteers, and his march from Point Isabel;* and his dependence must

* "This will constitute an auxiliary force of nearly 5000 men, which will be necessary to prosecute the war with vigor, and carry it, as it should be, into the enemy's country."—*Taylor's Letter to the Adjutant General, April 26, 1846.* "If the enemy oppose my march, in whatever force, I shall fight him."—*Taylor's Letter to the Adjutant General, May 7, 1846.*

have been upon the moral force of his army. This he well knew, and that the prevailing sentiment throughout the ranks was an anxiety for the battle, without waiting the arrival of re-enforcements; for a strong desire to reap the full harvest of glory pervaded both officers and men. The regular army had long been the subject of animadversion by popular orators; and the officers and men, feeling confident in their talent, bravery, and discipline, were now anxious that their efficiency should be put to the test, in the commencement of the war, against overwhelming odds. No greater stimulus for exertion certainly could have been desired; and, knowing this sentiment, participating in it to a degree, and knowing the strength of his army, who can doubt that the proper course was pursued by General Taylor when he chose to retain both of his positions and to force the communication?

Having decided upon this point, the proper action was evidently to bring on a conflict with the Mexican army in detail, or to dispute the passage of the Rio Grande, had either or both been possible. To either of these, the nature of the country and the winding course of the river presented difficulties, and the craft of the Mexican general was such as to have rendered extreme celerity necessary to insure success, which the first difficulties mentioned in a measure forbade.

As no such operation was attempted, the movement to Point Isabel became one of imperative necessity; and had it not been that the defensive

works of that depôt were in an unfinished state, prudence would have dictated an immediate return; for certainly, with all these known characteristics of the enemy, it could hardly have been believed that an army of ten thousand men, with heavy fixed batteries, could have failed in an attack against a field work garrisoned by two skeleton companies of artillery and a weak regiment of infantry. Although delayed to the last moment, and bold in itself, yet the march in return was entailed by the movement to the Point, and, being opposed, the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca were the consequence.

At Palo Alto, the American artillery, thrown, as it was, frankly and fearlessly into action, had the most powerful effect, and took advantage of the false disposition of Arista's infantry. The American infantry, located as far out of range as was compatible with a position within supporting distance, secured the artillery, and, while the latter had such decided effect, it was certainly the part of good policy to engage no other arm until the enemy was in confusion; but no advantage was taken of this when it had been effected by the fire of the artillery and the prompt action of Duncan's battery on the left. Had the movement of the whole American force in advance taken place at that time, it has been the expressed opinion of many that the field would have been swept and the conflict would have been ended at once;* and it is hardly doubt-

* This opinion is expressed in Campaign Sketches, p. 93.

ful that such would have been the case; for a determined charge by the American infantry, which had been almost intact, upon an enemy so cut up as was the Mexican army, must have driven the latter, dispersed, into the chaparral, where it is hardly possible that Arista could have rallied his forces during the night. The reason which has been assigned that the charge was not ordered, that the American general wished to protect his train, hardly has force, for there was no enemy in position to attack it, and if encumbered by his train on the 8th, he was no less so on the 9th. He had to finish the battle, and why it was not finished on the 8th, when the opportunity was offered for instantaneous and decisive action, can not be accounted for by any reasons of the policy which had been adopted.

The indecision and hesitancy to attack displayed on the morning of the 9th, when Arista moved off, and the subsequent summons of a meeting of officers to give opinions on the propriety of an advance, were still less in keeping with this policy; and the evil effect of the delay was demonstrated at the strong position of Resaca de la Palma, by the occupation of which Arista threw one half of his enemy's most powerful arm, the artillery, out of action, and rendered the fire of the other uncertain.

But the advance being resolved upon, it was persisted in, and the bold and vigorous manner in which the American troops fell on at Resaca de la Palma can not be too much admired. Once in ac-

tion, however, the control of the general, except in his timely advance of the cavalry and reserve, was gone, and the bravery of subordinates and soldiers did the work. Being accomplished, General Taylor did not allow his enemy again to retire at his leisure; though, from want of boats, and the full knowledge of the magnitude of the success, the victory was not immediately followed by the passage of the Rio Grande. Arista was therefore allowed to draw off the remnant of his force.

But all these operations were, at the commencement of a war, prosecuted against greatly superior forces, and without the full data in the character and dispositions of the enemy which they afforded for the future; and this must be remembered in forming a judgment upon their notice, as well as that critical remarks upon military operations are always after the fact.

The course of action so boldly pursued by General Taylor placed every physical advantage in Arista's hands; and had he been equal to the crisis, and his troops properly maneuvered, the commencement of the war might possibly have been of brighter augury to the Mexican nation. The American army was allowed to pass the Mexican on the night of the 1st of May, and, as Arista knew the whole locality well, an excellent opportunity for annoyance, at least, was lost. Then the opportunity for crushing the garrison of Fort Brown was neglected; for the attack of a field work by bombardment, at long range, the experience of Mexican

revolutions might have shown to be useless when not followed by a vigorous assault.

The greatest oversight of the Mexican commander was on the field of Palo Alto, in awaiting the American advance with his infantry in false position, and subsequently in sustaining a murderous cannonade for an hour before attempting any offensive movement. In consequence, the moral force of his troops was shaken, which had before been excellent for Mexican soldiers. They had been assured of the victory, and their imposing array and overwhelming numbers might well have induced confidence. If, instead of sustaining the fire of the American artillery in line, Arista had thrown his masses at once into the action in the first enthusiasm of the battle, with such impressionable soldiers as he commanded, certainly he had the best chance of success ; and the full strength of the moral power of the American army would have been required to withstand the onset of such overwhelming numbers in their first good order and array. One success would have achieved another ; and though desperate fighting would have been required to win the victory, yet the Mexican soldiers would have been taught that it was possible.

As it was, they were beaten at Palo Alto by the artillery before a movement was commenced ; and though the subsequent maneuvers of the field were well calculated to restore the battle and achieve success, the moral force to sustain a close conflict and carry them out with vigor was gone.

Nor was it recovered at Resaca de la Palma, under the prestige of the preceding defeat, and the vigorous charge of the victorious soldiers of Palo Alto.

The total and complete overthrow, and the speedy retreat into the interior, so different a result from that which had been anticipated, had its full effect upon the Mexican army for future operations. The prowess of American soldiers, so fully demonstrated, could never be forgotten in the whole course of the war.

CHAPTER III.

American Preparation for War—Difficulties of Executive—Avowed Object of War—California—New Mexico—Plan of Operations—General Gaines's Action at New Orleans—Term of Service of Volunteers—General Scott's Dispute with the War Department—General Taylor assigned to Command—Mr. Marcy's and General Scott's Letters to him on the Plan of Operations—General Taylor's Reply—Mr. Marcy's on the same Subject—General Taylor's Answer—Want of settled Plan of Operations—Observations.—Difficulties in preparing Advance from Matamoras—Occupation of Reynosa and Camargo—Arrival of Twelve Months' Volunteers, and Discharge of Louisiana Troops—Preparations for Movement—Organization of Regulars—Worth marches to Serralvo—Establishment of Entrepôt—Organization of Field Division of Volunteers—Concentration of active Force at Serralvo—March toward Monterey.

THE news of the commencement of hostilities on the Rio Grande having reached Washington, the great labor of military preparation and arrangement was thrown at once upon the government. This was a necessary consequence of the policy of

depending almost entirely upon a volunteer force, and of keeping the regular army to the minimum standard. In other cases of war, such policy might lead to positive disastrous results in the outset, by allowing an enemy better prepared to use his means of offense while the United States marshaled their forces for the conflict.

But in the knowledge of the strength of the country, and that, when the necessity became palpable, any sufficient numerical force could be raised, the policy, such as it was, had been persisted in. No increase of the army, other than by a single regiment of rifles for Oregon service, had been recommended by the President or advocated in Congress until the existence of positive facts of war. It may have been that the delay arose as much in reasons of home policy as in a belief in the efficiency of the system; for, with a strong and jealous opposition, watching narrowly every act of the executive, it was almost impossible to have provided for the contingency. The attempt would have been denounced as one to increase executive patronage, and in the fancied strength of the volunteer system would have been found an argument sufficiently strong to have insured its defeat. And it would have been at once argued by the opposition that the laws already in force, empowering the President to call forth the militia to repel invasion, were sufficient provision for the danger, and that the endeavor to increase the army had therefore its origin, not in a desire for the necessary defense

of the country, but in the wish to enforce what had already been termed the injustice designed and perpetrated against Mexico.

But the crisis had come; overt acts of hostility had been commenced on the part of Mexico, and the country was, *de facto*, in war. The enthusiasm of the American people was fairly aroused; and when the message of the President announced the existence of war, and called upon Congress to make provision for its prosecution, the fear of the resentment of a free people, whose first impulse is for the defense of national right and national honor, silenced the opposition, if, indeed, its members were not impressed with the necessities of the case.

They joined, therefore, with the supporters of the administration, the state of war was officially recognized as being the consequence of the act of Mexico, and bills were passed providing men, money, and munitions with an alacrity which, had all party feeling been left out of the question, would have been indicative of the desire of legislators to make amends for past delay, and have left no doubt of their opinion as to the necessity of the crisis and the justice of the cause.

By the act of May 13th, 1846, the President was authorized to call forth volunteers in any number not exceeding fifty thousand, to serve for the period of one year, or during the war, and to appoint the requisite general and staff officers for their command. The field and company officers were to be appointed and commissioned according to the laws

of the states whence the volunteers were called. Other acts, passed soon after, empowered him to increase the number of privates in the companies of the regular army to one hundred, should it be necessary, and to appoint an additional number of general officers in the regular service.* Money was appropriated for carrying the provisions of the several acts into effect, and every thing which the government had asked for the commencement of operations, thus far was promptly allowed and appropriated. The American Congress had done its part, and the President and cabinet proceeded to the execution of the difficult duty of carrying on a foreign war: a duty which the various safeguards to popular liberty, protected and cherished by the free institutions of the United States, render more difficult of execution on the part of the American executive than such duty is for that of any government less dependent upon the will of the people. The limitation of the power of executive officers, the frequent calls for information concerning measures requiring secrecy for success, the thousand prying eyes and brazen tongues attendant upon a free and uncontrolled public press, which often publishes false and exaggerated accounts of military movements before in propriety they should be discussed at all, are a few of the elements of difficulty in the military operations of the government which that of the United States must encounter. In the jealous watch of the opposition party, all these elements

* Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

are brought into play with the vigor of party animosity ; for neither orators nor editors will scruple to attach as much opprobrium as it is possible to attach to the acts of the executive. For the end of their own argument and political effect, each act will be spied out and remarked upon in the attempt to prove the baseness of the party in power, and that the incumbent chief magistrate of the nation is unworthy of his place and should be superseded. It matters not to the reckless politicians that indirect assistance is afforded to the enemy by such a course of conduct. In their headlong rush for power, this is a matter which does not immediately interfere with political prospects, and the reverse of the course might strengthen the administration ; and thus it is announced to the enemy that he has a strong party, where, were the dictates of patriotism observed by all, the whole strength of the country would be displayed in the crisis of war. Under more arbitrary governments, the strong arm of power can be exerted to arrest the action of such elements as these. But the government of the United States, restricted as it is by constitutional principles, and providing rather for the promotion of the welfare of the community in time of peace, depends upon public opinion for bringing forth the strength of the nation in war, as well as for all other support. This opinion is the corrective for the difficulties alluded to, and the absolute necessity of propitiating it may give rise to other difficulties in the desire always existing in a peo-

ple so enterprising as the American for action, of which, in war, the great portion should be at least ignorant of the immediate object of military movements, and necessarily are of details and difficulties.

The general plan of operations, and the preliminary arrangements for its prosecution, were soon determined upon by the executive, and the quantity of force which it was deemed necessary to employ was, in a few days after the commencement of preparations, required from the states nearest the scene of action.

The avowed object of the United States in war has been to obtain "indemnity for the past and security for the future." This was especially set forth in the war of 1812 with Great Britain; and although the government then combated the various obstacles in its prosecution with but little success, and utterly failed in obtaining the first object, yet the bold declaration of war, and the development of strength, however misapplied, which was its consequence, drew the attention of the world, and went far toward obtaining security from a repetition of the outrages which had led to the rupture.

The same object was avowed in the prosecution of hostilities against Mexico, and it was determined to seize upon her territory as indemnity for the wrongs inflicted by the commencement of war, as well as those of former date. California, comparatively uninhabited and unknown, and at a distance from the central and richer portions of Mexico, had been explored by American travelers, who brought

back reports of the salubrity of its climate, the fertility of its soil, and its mineral and other elements of wealth, which, even with estimates for exaggeration to which travelers are prone, showed that it was a territory of great value. British merchants had made efforts to obtain possession of its lands, and the harbors which were upon its coast were known to be the only good ones upon the shore of the northern Pacific Ocean. In the absence of any such upon the coast of Oregon, and the desire of the United States to possess a good and safe port for that region of country, then beginning to attract the serious attention of the government, was found a strong reason for its acquisition. Lying immediately south of the territory of Oregon, with no defined natural boundary between them, it was early looked upon with a view to its acquisition by individuals, and the measure had been discussed in the public prints long previous to the commencement of hostilities. Many Americans, in pursuit of wealth and adventure, had gone thither and settled, and were in considerable numerical strength in the northern part of the country. It has often been charged that the acquisition of the territory was the cause of war, both by Mexican and American opponents of the administration of the United States; but, when taken in connection with the oft-repeated offers of negotiation, such an idea appears absurd. The tone of public opinion, and the speedy adoption of the plan of seizing it, as well as instructions previously given to naval com-

manders,* would go to show that its acquisition had been looked to as a consequence of Mexican obstinacy, and as indemnity in case war was really the event. And doubtless great efforts would have been made to obtain it by purchase, had she acceded to the offer of negotiations.

New Mexico, another department of the Mexican republic, lying upon the direct route to California, and in great part included in the boundaries claimed by Texas upon her admission to the American Union, was also another territory which attracted attention.

The general plan of operations was to seize and occupy those territories, with a view to their retention as indemnity for the expenses of the war, while the movements of the main army upon the center of Mexican resources were to force an agreement to the terms of peace.† The only serious difficulties which could be anticipated in the conquest and occupation of the territories in question were the distance of the route, and those presented by the uninhabited and uncultivated country through which it led. These operated as much against Mexico as against the United States, for the routes which troops from the populous portions of the former would be forced to traverse were nearly as difficult as those from the latter.

* Mr. Bancroft to Commodore Sloat. Executive Document, No. 62, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 231.

† Collated from instructions to army and naval officers of the period of the commencement of the war.

Another expedition was soon after planned, which was to be sent against the city and state of Chihuahua. The city was represented as the *dépôt* for trade in the north of Mexico, and it was believed that, as the people were inimical to the central government, they were therefore willing to agree to American occupation. Another object of this expedition was to operate in conjunction with the main army. The instructions for each of these will be noticed in another place. But the expeditions to California, New Mexico, and Chihuahua were, from their nature, but partial operations of the war, with the view of securing incidental ends, and entirely separate from the great movements of the conflict.

In preparing for the main operations of the army, embarrassments were soon presented, arising in the conduct of American general officers. The first of these, and which was a partial cause of the second, was the action of Brevet Major-general Gaines, a gallant veteran of the war of 1812. Advanced in years, he had nevertheless, under the system of the American army, retained his commission, and, at the commencement of hostilities, was in command of the Western Geographical Division of the United States. He was the second in rank in the army; but old age had shattered his judgment, although it had left all the enthusiasm of his nature. In the anticipation of Mexican hostilities, he had early requested to be assigned to the command of the army which was to enter Mexico, according to

his views, not so much for "conquering a peace" as for a crusade against the "awful maladies of alternate anarchy and despotism."* Upon receiving the news of the danger of the army on the Rio Grande, he had taken measures for calling into service a number of volunteers, far exceeding the requisition of General Taylor, without the color of authority, except in his own opinion of the necessity of the case. From the vicinity of his headquarters at New Orleans to the seat of war, in the excited state of the public mind in the southwest, and the apparent exigency of the crisis, the calls were quickly responded to; and with no other provision than a hurried and incomplete armament, volunteers for six months, in numbers unknown either to the commanding general in the field or the authorities at Washington, were soon put en route for Brazos Santiago. Having thus commenced the business, and with his enthusiasm fairly aroused, Gaines proceeded to appoint officers in the line and staff, to call for an indefinite number of troops,† and, in short, appeared about to raise an army on his own responsibility, and to invade Mexico without regard to the necessities of his troops, or the action of the government, except in so far as it was intended that payment of expenses should be made through it. To put a stop to his embarrassing eccentricities, it was found necessary to relieve him from command; and, ac-

* Correspondence of General Gaines with the Adjutant General. Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress. † Idem ibidem.

cordingly, on the 2d of June, the order relieving him was sent from Washington.*

In preparing for the operations of the main army, the knowledge of American strength and of Mexican weakness led to action on the part of the government which could not fail to entail difficulty in the prosecution of hostilities. Without taking into consideration the natural obstinacy of all people of Spanish descent, or the military topography of the country of Mexico, or the difficulties to be encountered at home, it had been believed that no more than one year would be required to complete the operations of the war, and the volunteers were therefore originally called upon to serve for that short period. The consequence of this was, necessarily, the trouble of discharging them and raising new troops if Mexico continued obstinate, and the very measure was an encouragement for her to do so; for knowing, as she must, the short term of service of the main force of the army, she might well believe that the strife would be but temporary, and that, in the accumulated difficulties attending the prosecution of the war beyond the original term of service, she could obtain more favorable terms of peace in the end, even if unsuccessful in the contest. It was hardly thought at Washington that it would be requisite to carry the arms of the United States to the city of Mexico. Deeming that a few more blows as vigorous as those of

* Correspondence of General Gaines with the Adjutant General. Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

Palo Alto and Resaca would convince Mexico of the futility of resistance, attention was at first turned, in the impracticability of operating on the seaboard in summer, and in the anxiety of the American public, toward the Rio Grande as the base of operations. For conducting the great movements of the war, and the command of all troops, both regular and volunteer, General Scott, the commander-in-chief of the American army, was designated, and was ordered to hold himself in readiness for the duty. Although he at first manifested no anxiety for the service, and treated the matter with indifference, he at once entered upon the duties of preparation, and upon an occupation which might have served to amuse his leisure for several previous months. "The study of the routes of march and water conveyances for the several bodies of troops to the best points on the frontiers of Mexico, in the study of the northern, interior, and southern routes of that republic, in looking to the means of transportation on the Rio Grande, to and beyond that river, and in determining the depôts of supplies of all sorts on the American side," &c.*

But circumstances and the character of the general-in-chief soon produced an embarrassing rupture, and rendered his study of no immediate profit to himself or the service. General Scott had for a long period cherished political aspirations, and

* Correspondence of General Scott with the War Department. Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

from his position, his high reputation for bravery and military skill, the Whig party leaders had frequently spoken of him as their candidate, and kept alive hopes destined to be blasted either by the selection of another or by the success of political enemies.

The war with Mexico afforded a field for the exercise of Scott's military knowledge, which might, in reason, be expected to increase his reputation with a people so adulous of military glory as are the Americans, and ultimately raise him to the presidency. Such were the anticipations of many of both political parties; and, in the crisis in which the country then was, the movements of the general-in-chief were watched with anxiety. Many remarks were made by prominent men concerning his delay in Washington, both on the part of his friends and enemies.

To disprove the charge of inactivity which would, in any interval of active operations, be brought against the government, the President of the United States was anxious for his departure, and especially that the troops called out by General Gaines, and already at the seat of war, should be employed under direction of the general who was to conduct the main operations. Of this wish, and the existing state of opinion, General Scott was informed by the Secretary of War in a personal interview.

The information was considered of so much importance, that, on the 21st of May, the general-in-chief felt himself called upon to suspend his labors

of preparation, to explain his occupation and views, to denounce those who differed from him in opinion, and to impress upon the executive officers of the government that it was necessary that the commanding general of an invading army should have the full confidence and support of his superiors at home; all of which was apparently considered requisite, on the part of General Scott, "to protect himself from a fire in his rear from Washington."* The requests, in many things, were sensible, and his views upon the proposed military operations, had they been based upon accurate data, might not have been without merit; unless, indeed, he was too confident of success in preparing and organizing a force in three months' time which was to conquer a peace by "regular, incessant, and forward movements" in the direction of Mexico, from the base of the Rio Grande. But, whatever reason there was in his requests or in his views, his manner of expressing them was singularly unfortunate. His letter was considered arrogant in its tone, reflecting strongly upon the motives of the President and Secretary, and the reasons alleged for its composition were deemed to be of an exceedingly personal character. It was at once determined to relieve him from the service proposed, and on the 25th the Secretary of War informed General Scott that he would remain in Washington.

In subsequent correspondence, the general-in-

* Correspondence of General Scott with the War Department. Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

chief endeavored to explain the offensive portions of his letter, to place his imputations of bad faith at the door of the President's advisers, and expressed his willingness to depart at such time as the President might direct.* The confidence which may have been reposed in him up to that time was, however, shaken, and no orders were given him immediately to proceed to Mexico. The superse-
dure of the general-in-chief necessarily attracted much attention, and would doubtless have been made the subject of a charge of injustice had not the correspondence been called for by Congress and published. In consequence, the rebuke administered by refusing the command of the army to General Scott was supported by the manifestations of public opinion, called forth, however, as much by the peculiarity of his style as by any just appreciation of his motives.

The general-in-chief having been set aside in a measure, General Taylor was soon after charged with the direction of the movements of the main army, and in the want of any well-understood plan of operations, the consequence of his absence from Washington, and other circumstances, was soon found another element of difficulty. Moreover, General Taylor had two superiors at Washington, both of whom wrote to him, soon after his assignment to command, in terms which, when the two letters are compared, will be seen to have been

* Correspondence of General Scott with the War Department. Congressional Globe, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

calculated to impress him with the belief that the authorities at home were not very decided as to their own views of the necessary end of the operations, and to induce a corresponding indecision on his part.

Mr. Marcy wrote to General Taylor on the 8th of June, informing him of his assignment to the command, and of the amount of re-enforcement which he might expect. In regard to the immediate operations of the army, the hope was expressed that he would be able to place considerable bodies of troops in healthy situations upon the Rio Grande, and that, in the mean time, Monterey should be taken and held. Much was left to the discretion of the general. His views upon future operations were requested, and he was directed to inform the department of the requisite proportion of the different arms of troops. The question of most importance propounded was, "*Shall the campaign be conducted with the view of striking at the city of Mexico, or confined, so far as regards the forces under your immediate command, to the northern provinces of Mexico?*" And this was a question to which the answer of the commanding general was necessary before any decision could be made with regard to the proper course of operations.*

Four days after this question was proposed in Mr. Marcy's letter, General Scott wrote to Gen-

* Correspondence of the War Department with General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 323.

eral Taylor on the same subjects, giving him similar information of the amount of re-enforcement sent to him, and positively setting forth what was called the wish of the President as follows :

“ Without waiting for the arrival of that amount of force (28,070), but before, and as soon as you shall deem it safe in respect to the relative numbers and position of the enemy, your knowledge of the country, your supplies, and the means of transportation, it is the wish and expectation of the President that, with your accustomed energy, you take up lines of march beyond the Rio Grande, and press your operations toward the heart of the enemy's country, that is, upon such important points as you may deem it necessary to conquer and to hold. *The high road to the capital of Mexico will, of course, be one of those lines ;* and, if successful in your advances, the establishment of posts in your rear, well guarded, according to their distances from each other and the dangers of recapture, will be objects demanding your care. How far it may be necessary for you to penetrate, if not, at least, to the capital, and what halts you may find it proper to make short of that mark, will, of course, depend upon the events of the war. Should continued success attend your operations, you may, some time before, be met by the proposition to treat for peace, with an intermediate armistice. No such proposition will be entertained by you without your being first satisfied that it is made in good faith, and without your being in possession, or put

by stipulation into possession of such commanding positions as will insure good faith on the part of the enemy. Being satisfied on this point, you may conclude an armistice for a limited time, and refer the proposition to treat for peace to the government here."*

The discrepancy between these two papers requires but little commentary. The first propounded a question to the commanding general in the field, which must have implied that it was yet open, and that his views were necessary for its decision. The second, from General Scott, gave him to understand that it was the wish and expectation of the President that the high road to the city of Mexico should be one of his lines of march; and if this had already been decided at Washington, how could it be believed that General Taylor could do otherwise than give his attention to movements upon it? What necessity was there of his expressing an immediate opinion, if he had any, upon other movements? Certainly having two commanders at Washington was as absurd as it was useless, especially when the state of feeling existing between them was such as to render harmonious action impossible. If General Scott's letter were submitted to the Secretary of War before it was sent off, it must have been seen that it could have none other than a pernicious effect. If Gen-

* Correspondence of General Scott with General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 325.

eral Scott, desirous of retaining the semblance of command, wrote it without any authority other than that which was gathered in incidental conversation, it was a most unwarrantable interference, and especially in the directions concerning the armistice, which might better have come, under any circumstances, direct from the secretary. A supplemental note on this subject was afterward submitted to him, and received his sanction;* but whether the first letter had it or not, the attempt to keep General Scott in imaginary command seems to have been soon after given up on the part of the administration as well as his own; for no further instructions of the nature proceeded from him for some subsequent time.

On the 2d of July General Taylor answered both these letters, in a communication to the adjutant general of the army, from Matamoras; and in the answer he confined himself to the consideration of the facilities of the advance by the northern route from the base of the Rio Grande. After explaining delays, and announcing his intention of moving with a column of about 6000 men upon an experimental expedition as far as Monterey, the great object of which appeared to be to ascertain the agricultural capacity of the route, and especially the valley of the San Juan, he proceeded to give his views in respect to that route, and to opera-

* Correspondence of General Scott with General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 328.

tions upon it, which were made to depend almost entirely on the question of subsistence. It was considered that 6000 men was the maximum force which could be employed on the expedition, having regard to their subsistence, and the "*resources of the country in pack mules and transportation generally.*" His ulterior views, having advanced to Saltillo, upon the movements of the war, as dependent upon the topography of the country and the questions previously discussed, were set forth in the following paragraphs:

"Supposing a column of the above strength (6000 men) able to maintain itself at Saltillo, it will become a question, depending for its solution upon the elements above indicated, how far that force may be increased, or what amount of the twelve months' volunteers may be safely and profitably thrown forward from the rear with a view to future operations.

"From Camargo to the city of Mexico is a line little, if any, short of 1000 miles in length. The resources of the country are, to say the best, not superabundant, and over long spaces of the route are known to be deficient. Although the road, as we advance south, approaches both seas, yet the topography of the country, and the consequent character of the communications, forbid the taking up a new line of supply from Tampico or the Pacific coast. Except in the case, deemed improbable, of the entire acquiescence, if not support, on the part of the Mexican people, I consider it im-

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practicable to keep open so long a line of communication. It is therefore my opinion that our operations from this frontier should not look to the city of Mexico, but should be confined to cutting off the northern provinces—an undertaking of comparative facility and assurance of success.”*

The remainder of General Taylor’s answer contained information relative to his arrangements; but throughout there was no other decided recommendation of any military course, except that the operations from the north should be confined to the cutting off of the northern provinces, which it was supposed at the time would be assisted by the Chihuahua expedition.

Before this answer was received at Washington, on the 9th of July Mr. Marcy addressed a confidential communication to General Taylor upon the subject of the campaign. He was enjoined to continue the peaceful policy which he had hitherto adopted with the people of the country, and to take every opportunity of disabusing them of the idea that the war was to be one of rapine and plunder; to assist any of the northern states in their attempt to become independent of the central government, or to remain neutral during the war, provided such assistance did not interfere with his military operations. These, it was said, must proceed vigorously. “Policy and force are to be com-

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 329.

bined, and the fruits of the former will be prized as highly as the latter.”*

Such directions as the foregoing must have been induced by the knowledge of the unstable nature of Mexican authority, without a definite understanding of the importance or the resources of the states referred to, which could not be well ascertained at Washington. Being indefinite, they can only be regarded as an expression of general policy, to be made, if possible, an incidental aid in obtaining the end of the war. But in this letter of July 9th is found the first positive mention of any plan for striking at the center of Mexican resources found in any of the military correspondence on the Mexican war. It is set forth as follows:

“If, from all the information which you may communicate to the department, as well as that derived from other sources, it should appear that the difficulties and obstacles to the conducting of a campaign from the Rio Grande, the present base of your operations, for any considerable distance into the interior of Mexico, will be very great, the department will consider whether the main invasion should not ultimately take place from some other point on the coast, say *Tampico*, or some other point in the vicinity of *Vera Cruz*. This suggestion is made with a view to call your attention to it, and to obtain from you such information as you may be able to impart. Should it be de-

* Mr. Marcy to General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 333.

terminated that the main army should invade Mexico at some other point than the Rio Grande—say the vicinity of Vera Cruz—a large and sufficient number of transport vessels could be placed at the mouth of the Rio Grande by the time the healthy season sets in—say early in November. The main army, with all its munitions, could be transported, leaving a sufficient force behind to hold and occupy the Rio Grande, and all the towns and provinces which you may have conquered before that time. In the event of such being the plan of operations, your opinion is desired what increased force, if any, will be required to carry it out with success. We learn that the army could be disembarked a few miles distant from Vera Cruz, and readily invest the town in its rear, without coming within range of the guns of the fortress of San Juan d’Ulloa. The town could readily be taken by land, while the fortress, being invested by land and sea, and all communication cut off, must soon fall. From Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico there is a fine road, upon which the diligences or stage-coaches run daily. The distance from Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico is not more than one third of that from the Rio Grande to the city of Mexico. Upon these important points, in addition to those mentioned in my letter of the 8th of June, your opinions and views are desired at the earliest period your duties will permit you to give them. In the mean time, the department confidently relies on you to press forward your operations vigorously

to the extent of your means, so as to occupy the important points within your reach on the Rio Grande and in the interior."* The letter closed by requesting a table of distances from Chihuahua to the port of Guyamas, on the Pacific, as that was necessary in order to determine the practicability of completing a cordon across the continent.

To this General Taylor replied on the 1st of August from Matamoras. The first and second paragraphs of his letter were in answer to the portions of Mr. Marcy's dispatch which related to the policy of the American government in treating the inhabitants of the country with leniency, and availing itself of the dissensions among the Mexicans. His views on that subject were as indefinite as his instructions, although he coincided, in the main, with the Secretary of War, and stated that he should fully comply with them upon that point, should opportunity occur. The third paragraph related to military operations, and his views were thus expressed: "As to the military operations best calculated to secure an early and honorable peace, my report of the 2d of July will have put the department in possession of my views touching operations in this quarter, and I have now little to add to that report. Whether a large force can be subsisted beyond Monterey must be determined by actual experiment, and will depend much upon the disposition of the enemy to-

* Mr. Marcy to General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 335.

ward us. If a column (say 10,000 men) can be sustained in provisions at Saltillo, it may advance thence upon San Luis Potosi, and, I doubt not, would speedily bring proposals for peace. If, on the other hand, a column can not be sustained beyond Monterey, it will be for the government to determine, from considerations of state, whether a simple occupation of the frontier departments (including Chihuahua and New Mexico), or, in addition to such occupation, an expedition against the capital (by way of Vera Cruz), would be most expedient. I can not give a positive opinion as to the practicability of an expedition against Vera Cruz, or the amount of force that would probably be required for it. The Department of War must be much better informed than I am on that point. From the impracticable character of the routes from Tampico, particularly that leading to Mexico, I should judge an expedition against the capital from that point to be out of the question. The simultaneous embarkation of a large body of troops at Brazos Santiago, as proposed in the secretary's communication, would be attended with great difficulty, if we may judge from the delays and danger which accompany the unloading of single transports, owing to the almost perpetual roughness of the bar and boisterous character of the anchorage. It may also well be questioned whether a force of volunteers, without much instruction, more than those now here can receive in season for such an expedition, can prudently be allowed

to form the bulk of an army destined for so delicate an operation as a descent upon a foreign coast, where it can have no proper base of operations or supplies.”*

The remainder of the letter referred to his present operations, and he inclosed the required table of distances, which spoke more forcibly concerning the practicability of sending an expedition to Guyamas than could any opinions of the general.

The correspondence upon the plan of operations ceased for a time, and the executive officers of the United States were thrown upon their own resources for the arrangement of the great movements of the war; and, in the mean time, such as were undertaken progressed with but partial ends in view, and without any regard to the great object of the conflict, or that unity of action which is the first requisite of military operations.

This was first neglected in the minor expeditions of New Mexico, and California, and Chihuahua. But the two first were each for a definite end, and all three were against separate states, distant from the resources of Mexico, which could not, from the nature of the country and the force of circumstances, be brought to their support. They could not interfere with, much less control, the operation of the main army. That could, in propriety, have but one object, which was to force Mexico to make peace on the terms of the United States;

* General Taylor to the President. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 337.

and a determined and well-settled plan for obtaining this end was the first requisite for successful operation. To obtain any concessions by treaty through the means of force, it is necessary that the demanding party should be in position to present an alternative more disadvantageous than the demanded concession, and the disparity must be increased with the obstinacy of the refusers. In most nations it is even necessary to present the alternative of a loss of nationality as the extreme consequence of refusal, certainly of great national calamity and distress. With a country so independent of commerce as Mexico, and of such peculiar characteristics, there was but one ultimate end—to seize upon the center of her resources and her power, and present, as soon as possible, the last alternative, of submission or extinction.

The capital of Mexico, like that of all other countries without commerce and free communication, was the center of her resources, and attention was directed to its capture, should it become necessary, and the route by which it was to be achieved. Certainly, in the attainment of peace, it was the part of good policy to threaten the great and final military object as speedily as possible, and to waste no more time upon partial operations than was absolutely necessary. While, therefore, it was well to employ the troops, during the sickly season on the Gulf coast, in the partial operations of the north, both in reference to their instruction and health, besides, by inflicting the lesser evils of the

war upon Mexico, to increase her inducements to make peace in a season of necessary inactivity, yet to regard such employment as the great end of the war would have been folly. Certainly the contemplated movement of troops in a distant country, without any definite object other than to ascertain the capacity of a certain region in subsistence, when it was considered, and with good reason, a question of much doubt whether one step in advance should be taken after the experiment was verified, might have induced, on the part of the general commanding in the field, a suggestion of some other end than that which he had immediately in view, and something more positive upon the suggestion of Mr. Marcy, which was finally adopted at Washington, than the statement of difficulties without any suggestion for overcoming them. The effect of the want of arrangement of a plan of operations in the outset will be seen in the sequel; but, under all these circumstances, with an unfriendly general-in-chief, with a small regular army, with a violent opposition party, and without positive advice or suggestion from the general in the field, it can not be denied that the task of the cabinet at Washington to arrange the outline of attack, at a distance of near two thousand miles from Mexico, was one of no small magnitude and difficulty.

While the correspondence upon the plan of campaign was carried on, various circumstances delayed the preparations for movement in the partial op-

erations which the general had determined upon. The number of volunteers which had been sent out under the unauthorized requisitions of General Gaines exceeded by some three thousand the number which had been called for by General Taylor on the 26th of April, and the arrival of these troops, without any corresponding increase of transportation, field equipment, or subsistence, necessarily embarrassed his movements.* When the requisition had been made, it had been the intention of General Taylor to employ the new troops, in conjunction with the regulars, for the purpose of clearing the river, and performing any other service which might be ordered by the government. After the arrival of the first detachments of the force, he contemplated making the movement upon Monterey, to operate in the valley of the San Juan,† and for this object it was deemed absolutely necessary to use the Rio Grande as the channel of communication as far up as Camargo. Some arrangements for procuring a number of steamers to navigate the Rio Grande had been early made, but it was not until the 28th of May that an officer was sent to the United States to purchase and send out steamers of sufficient number and suitable description for the navigation of the river to the extent required for any great operation.‡ There was much delay

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, May 20th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 99.

† Idem, May 21, 1846. Idem, p. 300.

‡ Major Bliss to Capt. Sanders, May 28th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 552.

in the arrival of those purchased under the authority of the general, as well as of others dispatched by the quarter-master's department from New Orleans. The light draft required rendered it a matter of much hazard for them to cross the Gulf, and delays were a necessary consequence. In the mean while, a battalion was pushed up the river as far as Reynosa, and upon the arrival of steamers a regiment was sent at once to Camargo, which town was looked to as the depôt pending the operations on Monterey. These small towns were occupied without any opposition whatever, for the Mexican army had fallen back beyond them, on the road to Monterey. As steamers continued to arrive, additional troops and munitions were thrown forward, but it was not until the 24th of July that Worth's division was concentrated at Camargo.

In the mean time, the different quotas of twelve months' volunteers commenced to arrive in the country of operations. As no definite end of the immediate movements of the army had been concerted between the commanding general and the officers of the executive departments, many things necessary for the efficient equipment of the whole number of troops, regulars and volunteers, were wanting. But as the season advanced, and steamers continued to arrive, the difficulty, so far as occasioned by the want of water transportation, was partially obviated.

The Louisiana volunteers, who had responded to Gaines's call, were disposed of by discharging

them, inasmuch as they had been mustered into service for an illegal term, and the term of three months, for which alone they could be held to serve, was too short for the completion of any operation of magnitude in which they might engage. But one company out of the whole number would consent to be mustered into service for twelve months, and, with this exception, the Louisiana volunteers were transported by return steamers to the mouth of the river, and thence to New Orleans, to be discharged.*

By the 1st of August arrangements had been made for throwing forward the main body of the army (regulars and twelve months' volunteers). On the 4th General Taylor moved his headquarters from Matamoras, and arrived on the 8th at Camargo. The greater portion of his troops was soon after concentrated at that point, and the expedition to Monterey was organized. Competent garrisons had been left at the various towns on the river, a plentiful supply of water transportation had arrived, and the means were at hand for keeping up a depôt of any requisite size at Camargo, filled from the valley of the Mississippi. The only lack of means then felt was in the quantity of land transportation. A considerable amount was at hand, in the shape of pack mules of the country, and the disposition of the inhabitants was such as to render them available. Arrangements were im-

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, House of Representatives, p. 307-320.

mediately made for their procurement, and a sufficient number for the service of a column of about 6000 men, which General Taylor had contemplated moving with, were soon engaged. Whether the country could have afforded more than were furnished is perhaps questionable; but as the want of transport was subsequently made a subject of serious complaint, it may be believed that it would have been difficult to obtain them.

The regular troops of the army were, soon after General Taylor's arrival at Camargo, organized into two divisions, under Generals Twiggs and Worth, and on the 19th of August the movement on Monterey commenced. On that day Worth's first brigade marched to establish an entrepôt at Serralvo; for the two routes which led from Camargo to Monterey, through Serralvo and China, had been reconnoitered by parties under Colonels Duncan and Hays, and, in consequence, the most northerly, by Serralvo, had been chosen. Serralvo was occupied without opposition, and the establishment of the entrepôt was at once commenced. Worth employed himself in collecting additions to the supplies of bread-stuffs and forage with some success, and also obtained considerable additional transportation.* Spies were thrown out from his position toward Monterey, and one was so successful as to enter that town and return, bringing information

* General Worth to Major Bliss, September 3d, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, House of Representatives, p. 419.

of the amount of Mexican force, and the nature of the defenses. But other accounts differed so widely, that, in general, not much was known of the condition of things at the city which was about to be the object of attack.

On the 24th, Butler's second brigade moved from Camargo, and advanced as far as Puntiağuda, twelve miles in rear of Serralvo, to which place its convoy was thrown forward.

Twiggs's troops marched by brigades subsequently, each having under its escort a train of provisions for the entrepôt, and thus, in succession, the corps of the regular army were brought up to Serralvo and its vicinity.

The troops of the twelve months' volunteers, which were to form part of the column, were organized into a field division. The reasons for dispensing with a large force, which was at his disposal, in the ensuing operations, were assigned by General Taylor in the following paragraph of "Orders No. 108," as follows:

"The limited means of transportation, and the uncertainty in regard to the supplies that may be drawn from the theater of operations, imposes upon the commanding general the necessity of taking into the field, in the first instance, only a moderate portion of the volunteer force now under his orders."*

In consequence, four regiments constituted the

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session the thirtieth Congress, p. 500.

field division, under the command of General Butler, with Hamer and Quitman as his brigadiers. The remainder of the volunteer force, amounting in all, exclusive of strong garrisons for the different posts in the rear, to over 6000 troops, were left in camp and garrison at Camargo, and at the different points along the river.

On the 5th of September General Taylor left Camargo for the advance. Butler's division marched on the 6th. On the 9th General Taylor arrived at Serralvo, and by the 13th the last brigade had arrived at that point, and the column was in motion for Monterey.

The order of march had been issued on the 11th, and on the 13th Twiggs's division moved in advance, followed on the 14th and 15th by Worth's and Butler's. Two regiments of Texan horse, which completed the force of the column, had been sent from Camargo by the southern route through the town of China, under orders to join the main force at Marin.

The progress of the column was unopposed by any serious resistance, although several alertes took place with Mexican cavalry pickets stationed at different points on the route. They were first seen at Papagayas on the 13th, but retired without resistance. On the 14th, a trifling affair took place at Ramos between the advanced Texan Rangers and another party of observation. On the 15th, as the head of the column approached Marin, a force of Mexican lancers was observed in the town, but

it fell back immediately, and Twiggs's division marching through the place, pitched its camp that night on the banks of the Rio San Juan, three miles beyond Marin, and twenty-four miles to the northeast of Monterey. At this point the army was concentrated on the following days, and on the morning of the 18th the whole force advanced together.

CHAPTER IV.

Delays in Mexican Preparation—Intrigues of the Santanistas—Action of Santa Anna—His Plan for a Pronunciamiento—Immediate Effect—Action of the American Government—Efforts of Paredes to retain Power—His Difficulties—Revolution of August, 1846—Downfall of Paredes—Return of Santa Anna—His Manifesto, August the 16th—Action of the Mexican Government under Salas—Attempted Issue of Prize Letters—American Offer of Negotiations—Arrival of Santa Anna at the Capital—Measures of the Mexican Government—Preparation at Monterey—General Mejia—Decrees and Proclamations of Ampudia.

WHILE the preparations of the United States for the prosecution of hostilities progressed but slowly in the cabinet and in the field, those of Mexico for the same end were delayed by the political intrigues of her different factions, all, as usual, professing deep devotion to the cause of their country, and denouncing their political as well as their national enemies in the same connection. To relate the causes of changes in Mexican administration, as well as the action of the government of the United States as connected therewith, reference

must be had to the state of Mexico a short period anterior to the commencement of hostilities.

The monarchical intentions of Paredes and his party, well divined and understood by his opponents, had called forth a violent opposition to his administration. The partisans of Santa Anna at once took advantage of it to intrigue for his reaccession to power and the overthrow of Paredes. The ex-dictator was during the while at Havana, apparently amusing himself, but anxiously watching the turns of the political wheel in Mexico, in the course of which he hoped again to be in the ascendant. He had not been wanting in personal agency in the endeavors to bring about such result, and early in the year 1846 had proposed a plan for a pronunciamiento, which provided in its first article for the overthrow of the government of Paredes, in its second and third for the convocation of a Congress, to be chosen according to the Constitution of 1824, in its fourth for the existence of the army, and in its fifth for the punishment of its opponents.* In letters to his friends in Mexico, Santa Anna declared himself in favor of the Constitution of 1824, because, in the existing state of things, the plan which he had formerly advocated of drawing the whole power of Mexico to a center for the purpose of insuring unity of action was impracticable. His first great purpose was, however, the overthrow of Paredes's government, and the de-

* General Santa Anna's plan. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 35.

feat of the designs of that person and Don Lucas Alaman, and their supporters.* His friends in general being satisfied with his views and intentions, the plan proposed by him was assiduously circulated in Mexico. It probably would have met with early and complete success, had not dissensions arisen among the Santanistas themselves, in consequence of which, at the instigation of Almonte, who, although one of the ministry of Paredes, was mixed up in the intrigues, various alterations were introduced, which rendered the plan odious to many parties.† Like all other plans which are presented by Mexican chiefs when they wish to ride into power on the wave of revolution, one of its strongest features was the guarantee of the existence of the army. In the reasons advised by Santa Anna to be given for the pronunciamiento, that body was declared to be in danger in case of the accession of a foreign prince to power, who, it was asserted, would confide in no other troops than those which he should bring with him, and who would exclude all Mexicans from public employment in favor of his own countrymen and courtiers. Considerations such as these, once fully impressed upon the minds of the leeches who have drained the treasury of Mexico for their own benefit, would doubtless have caused the immediate success of the revolt, the downfall of the despotism of Paredes, and the renewal of that of Santa Anna.

* Letter of Santa Anna. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 36-38.

† Note to the same. *Idem*, p. 38.

The effect of the movement, notwithstanding the alteration of the plan proposed, was soon apparent. Pronunciamientos were rife early in the spring of 1846, and in April, Don Juan Alvarez, who, in a manner, controlled the south of Mexico, pronounced against Paredes upon a plan of his own, and, so far as his influence extended in the southern departments, met with complete success.*

Of the nature of these intrigues, and the designs of either party, the government of the United States was fully informed by Mr. Black, who remained in the city of Mexico after the departure of Mr. Slidell. The information appears to have been given, with the purpose that it should reach the United States government, by a leading Santanista; for he not only communicated the original design of the revolt to Mr. Black, but furnished him with a copy of Santa Anna's plan, and of a letter which explained his position and intended course of action.† The letter of Mr. Black, with the accompanying papers, reached Washington about the 12th of May, and the subject was immediately acted upon by the executive of the United States.

The American government looked with no favor upon the project of re-establishing a monarchy upon the northern continent, and it had become fully aware, from the intelligence just then received from the Rio Grande, as well as from the

* Mr. Black to Mr. Buchanan, April 26, 1846. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 34.

† Correspondence. Idem, p. 38.

failure of negotiations, that there existed no chance of peace while Paredes remained in power.* Its action was therefore immediately taken to favor his competitor, so far as it could be done incidentally, and without any direct compromise of the United States. On the 13th of May orders were issued to Commodore Connor, commanding the blockading squadron in the Gulf of Mexico, to permit the entrance of Santa Anna into Vera Cruz, should he attempt to pass.† This order, given before the receipt of the intelligence of the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, could have been intended for no other purpose than to intimate a sympathy for the liberal as opposed to the monarchical party of Mexico, for it was given without any correspondence with Santa Anna, without pledge or promise from him, and was in effect but an intimation, for no force could have blockaded the coast of Mexico so effectually as to prevent his landing in the country at some unfrequented point, if he felt disposed.

Had the leaders of the liberal party in Mexico been guided by aught else than their own selfish views, the measure of policy in allowing the passage of Santa Anna would probably have had its effect; for it was certainly the interest of their country to make peace with the United States, and the order referred to must have been taken by them

* President's Annual Message, 1846.

† Mr. Bancroft to Commodore Connor, May 13th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 775-777.

as an exponent of friendly feeling in case they were successful. But they looked only to the primary objects of their own selfishness, and for promoting these they enlarged upon the military talents of Santa Anna, the necessity of employing them in the war, and kept up the excitement against Paredes by the continued cry of the danger in which the liberties and honor of the nation were placed in consequence of his maladministration while engaged in his monarchical intrigues. Santa Anna's own course was very much of the same character. Whether he hoped to be able to control public opinion, and to turn its tide when he gained power, is a question which he alone can decide. But he was committed to a hostile course of action, while he was at Havana, with his own people; and, notwithstanding the repeated asseverations of American newspapers that he had entered into engagements to make peace as soon as possible, it is very doubtful whether he ever was committed on that side further than to declare that he would acquiesce in the will of the Mexican people; and this not to public functionaries nor in any positive manner, but only in ordinary conversation. Whatever may have been his intentions, if, indeed, he had any idea of making peace, the publications referred to were serious embarrassments, for they only gave an argument to his enemies at home, to meet which he was obliged to commit himself still more positively to measures of hostility.

The defeat of Arista on the Rio Grande had de-

prived the government of Paredes of the prestige of military glory. For its recovery, and for the retention of power by a retention of popularity, all the energy of the president and ministry was put forth in raising men and money; and it was daily announced that Paredes would repair to the army, to conduct operations against the invaders in person. But the progress of the different intrigues in which he was a party, and those of his opponents, tended to prevent his departure for a long time, if, indeed, he seriously contemplated leaving the capital. The revolt of Alvarez had not been suppressed, and the proceedings of the Santanistas threatened a revolution the moment he was beyond the limits of the city. A pronunciamiento had broken out in Jalisco, and a portion of the troops destined for the north were ordered thither for its suppression. This was another cause of complaint against Paredes on the part of the Santanistas, as it was said that he deprived the army of the north, then preparing to make good the national defense, of reinforcement, in order to sustain his personal power. Early measures had been adopted by Paredes to suppress the expression of opinion adverse to his government, but, in spite of the penalties threatened against editors, both opposition and its expression increased.

In the mean while, a color of legality had been given to his usurped authority by the Congress assembled under his early convocataria, which, on the 13th of June, elected him President of Mexi-

co.* On the following day he solicited and obtained its permission to take military command of the army; but he was in no haste to depart, and leave political affairs in confusion.

He had to arrange many things preparatory to active operations, as well as to secure his power. The greatest difficulty was encountered in raising money, and to enable him to effect it, the Congress passed bills giving to the President unlimited power in that respect, as well as in the appointment of officers. These were not, however, passed until some time in July; and when, with the security afforded in the power conferred, Paredes prepared to leave the city of Mexico, although the revolt in Jalisco was still a cause of uneasiness and distrust, the Santanistas, who watched the course of events with eagerness, fearful of danger to their schemes should he with this unlimited power assume command of a large army in the field, arranged their plans to insure his downfall.

It was announced that the President would leave the capital on the 31st of July. On that day the garrisons of Vera Cruz and San Juan d'Ulloa, headed by Generals Landero and Perez, pronounced in favor of Santa Anna. Immediately on the reception of the news in Mexico, the garrison of that city joined in the pronunciamiento, and General Salas, who proclaimed himself as the chief of the liberating army, seized upon the citadel. Valentin Gomez Farias, a leader of the liberal party, acted as

* Published proceedings of the Mexican Congress.

his counselor, and lent all his influence to support the rebellion. The vice-president, Bravo, and the ministry, made some opposition on paper, but it was fruitless, and on the 5th of August the insurgents were in full power, and Paredes was a prisoner. Some intention was at first manifested of inflicting upon him summary punishment as a traitor and a monarchist; but Salas chose to pursue a different course of policy, and the only proceedings against him were to deprive him of his liberty. Soon after he left the country, and his interference with Mexican affairs was for a time suspended.

During the progress of the scheme of revolution, Santa Anna had remained at Havana, awaiting the moment when its successful execution would permit him to land in Mexico with safety. He was surrounded by many political friends, and among them was Almonte. In the spring of 1846, this individual had been appointed minister to France and England by Paredes, and had proceeded as far as Havana on his route, when he was recalled. He was there engaged in the various intrigues of Santa Anna, as he had been in Mexico, and conducted a correspondence with some of his friends in the United States,* having for its object the embarrassment of that government at home while engaged in the Mexican war, showing plainly that, whatever may have been the sentiments of Santa

* See Appendix, No. 1. Receipt of Havana letters acknowledged by American correspondents.

Anna at the time, that of one of his advisers, at least, was of unmitigated hostility.

When news was received at Havana of the pronunciamiento at Vera Cruz, Santa Anna and suite sailed at once for Mexico. He landed at Vera Cruz on the 16th of August, having passed the blockading squadron without question or delay. On the same day he issued a manifesto,* denouncing the monarchical schemes of Paredes and the ambitious views of the United States, and vindicating his own conduct. The latter was a matter of some difficulty, even upon paper, in so far as related to his asserted strong desire for the prosperity of his country; for his tortuous course of public action had rendered it almost impossible to show any thing like a governing principle, except for his own aggrandizement, either for good or for evil. He ended by again declaring himself in favor of the Constitution of 1824, and that thenceforth he was the slave of public opinion, and should yield implicit obedience to its dictates. Having put forth this exponent of his sentiments for effect upon the Mexican people, he retired to his hacienda to await the course of events, while Almonte and Rejon went to the capital for the purpose of controlling them. They proved to be successful in their action, and state after state declared in favor of Santa Anna.

The nominal authority of the new government

* Commodore Connor to Mr. Bancroft, and Manifesto. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 775-777.

remained in the hands of Salas ; for, although Santa Anna had been invited by him, as general of the "liberating army," to assume the exercise of power, he chose to remain at his hacienda until the affairs of the new government were established, and he could enter the capital without danger of interfering with the progress of his popularity or to the government. As every action of his at the time was one of policy, the state of his wounded leg was pleaded as an excuse for his remaining at Mango del Clavo,* by which Mexicans were again reminded that he had suffered in the cause of his country.

Between the 6th of August and the 14th of September, the Mexican government was straining every nerve to increase its power and to prepare for the prosecution of the war. Salas, whose boast it was that the chief end which he had in view, during his temporary exercise of the executive power, was to assist the brave army about to fight the enemy,† issued various proclamations, calling upon the people to take part in the war, and to contribute means in money and in kind for its support. As a measure of hostility, an attempt was made to put in execution the scheme of selling letters of marque to foreigners, that they might attack and prey upon American commerce. Blank prize letters and passports, with the signature of Salas, countersigned by Almonte, and accompanied by blank certificates of naturalization, were sent in

* Mexican Official Correspondence.

† Idem.

any required quantity to Havana, where they were offered for sale to any who might have a piratical inclination.* The measure had doubtless been thought of and agreed upon at Havana; and as such men as Almonte and Rejon were the active agents in causing its adoption, it is fair to suppose that they had taken some steps toward securing acceptance and purchase of their permits to plunder on the high seas with impunity while arranging matters for Santa Anna's return. But the whole scheme had been defeated, long previous to the attempt to carry it into execution, by the provisions of treaties existing between the United States and Spain, and other powers, and the early avowal on the part of their government to treat all persons as pirates who should, without proper authority and legal naturalization, engage in the business. The Spanish authorities of Cuba at once avowed their intention to enforce the treaty stipulations;† and in the danger of the business, if any letters were purchased or accepted, not a single privateer sailed under them, and the whole scheme ended in nothing.

During the administration of Salas, another proposition was received from the American government for opening negotiations for peace. The American President, deeming that, after the result of the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, the Mexicans could not attribute any such propo-

* Letter of Mr. Campbell, consul at Havana, with copies of blank passports, prize letters, and certificates of naturalization. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 40-42.

† Idem ibidem.

sition to a consciousness of weakness, was willing to sacrifice again the ordinary rules of national intercourse on the altar of Mexican pride, and, by again taking the initiative, to afford her an opportunity for ending the war.* The measure may have been one of policy with regard to the state of parties in the United States ; for, by making the offer, it was demonstrated to those who had already urged against the administration of Mr. Polk that he had plunged the country unnecessarily into war, that its continuance was, as its commencement had been, dependent upon the will of the Mexican government. As the letter of Mr. Buchanan, which made the proposition, bore date on the 27th of July, three days before the pronunciamiento at Vera Cruz, it can not be believed that any knowledge of the immediate return of Santa Anna to Mexico was in the possession of the American President and cabinet, however much they might have hoped for a favorable result from the downfall of Paredes's administration and the return of the ex-dictator. But, in making the offer, there was no sacrifice of the indemnity which it had been intended from the commencement of hostilities to demand from Mexico ; for, by the 27th of July, the various expeditions against California and New Mexico had so far advanced that it was certain that those territories would be occupied by the troops of the United States before a treaty could be concluded, which, if upon the basis of *uti possidetis*, would have giv-

* President's Annual Message, 1846.

en them to the United States; and that basis was looked to, at the time, as one upon which to treat.*

The letter was answered by Señor Rejon, who was Minister of Relations under Salas, on the 31st of August. The government, which had been for so short a time established, and whose originators had used the cry of enmity to the United States as a means of gaining power, was then in no condition of acceding to the proposition, even if it had been desired. While, therefore, the answer of Mr. Rejon was courteous and modest, it insisted upon discussing the causes of the war, which had been waived in the communication of the American secretary, and was, in fact, a refusal to enter upon negotiations at the time.† It was said, however, that the whole matter would be referred to the Mexican Congress, which had been convoked to meet in the following December, for its consideration and decision. The intercourse ended with this reply, and the dispute was left to the arbitrament of arms.

Mexico continued her efforts to raise men and means of war, and, among other schemes which were concocted for the injury of her adversary, was one which bore so similar a character to that of selling her letters of marque and blank certificates of naturalization, that it may well be believed that

* Mr. Bancroft to Commodore Sloat, July 12th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 238.

† Correspondence between Mr. Buchanan and Señor Rejon. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, first Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 42, 43.

they had their origin in the same head, although something of the kind had been attempted by General Arista on the Rio Grande. It was no less than a plan, officially and openly avowed by the Mexican government, for inducing desertion from the American army, and a commission of five officers was actually appointed* to determine and report upon the rewards which were to be given to traitors. Whether it was intended that the plan should actually succeed, and that the government should fulfill its promises to those who should prove false to their sworn allegiance or no, the edict which convoked the commission was published, setting forth many intended benefits, in order that the contemplated proposition might be known to those upon whose cupidity it was designed to operate: perhaps the first instance known to history where a government having any professed regard for its character has publicly undertaken any thing so injurious to its dignity as the attempt at bribing private soldiers by wholesale, and by the act of its chief authorities.

Santa Anna approached the capital in September. When he reached Ayotla, eighteen miles from Mexico, he was met by letters from Salas, as head of the Provisional Government, again tendering him the supreme power. But the offer was again declined, on the ground that the chief desire of Santa Anna was to serve his country in the army. He declared that he would not abandon the post

* Mexican Official Publications. *Diario del Gobeirno.*

of danger for the post of power in the situation of his country at the time, and closed his answer by many assurances of his disinterested patriotism.*

This correspondence, published and circulated on the 14th of September, paved the way for his reception in the capital. He entered on the 15th, and was received with all the appearances of a triumph; and, in the show of enthusiasm, it might have been believed that he was looked upon as the regenerator of Mexico.

Immediately after his arrival, the Provisional Government ordered a levy of thirty thousand men, and issued its requisitions upon the different states. The contingents were ordered to be at San Luis de Potosi or the capital within seventy days from the date. This prompt action on the part of the new government, as contrasted with the delays of that of Paredes, was loudly proclaimed as the benefit of the change, and the success of Mexico in the struggle with the United States was foretold with confidence. Santa Anna was, however, in no haste to engage in the struggle, and intended that he should be fully prepared and in strong force before he met the American army. He had sent orders to Ampudia, who had been assigned to the command of the northern army, to evacuate Monterey, unless he was fully confident of a successful resistance, and to fall back upon San Luis, where the new generalissimo was about to establish

* Santa Anna's letter from Ayotla, September 14th, 1846. *Diario del Gobierno*.

his head-quarters. On the 28th of September four thousand soldiers marched from the capital to San Luis, and in a short time Santa Anna proceeded to the same place.

Throughout this period, while the central government of Mexico had been torn by the intrigues of the different factions, preparations had been slowly progressing for resisting the American advance at Monterey. As Arista and Ampudia had both been summoned to Mexico to attend an investigation of the affairs of Palo Alto and Resaca, the command of the army had devolved upon Mejia. The defenses of the town had been commenced shortly after the arrival of Arista's beaten forces, and had been continued from time to time by both citizens and soldiers, as the movements and intentions of the American general became apparent.

On the 20th of August, the force present in and near the city amounted to over four thousand men, exclusive of citizens. As it was known that Ampudia was en route to assume the command, Mejia, upon whom the responsibility could not rest in case of failure, pursued the same course which he had at Matamoras. He indulged the authorities at Mexico in many anticipations of success, and assured them, in his official communications, of the certainty of triumph.*

He had excellent means of information, and knew the number and description of the American troops nearly as well as their own general. Of

* Mejia's Official Correspondence, published in Mexico.

their movements he kept the Mexican government well informed, as well as of his own intentions ; but he never hazarded any thing for the doubtful prospect of being able to announce a victory. When he communicated intelligence of Worth's advance to Serralvo, he asserted that he had contemplated attacking him, but had been deterred by the consideration that Worth's troops were the veterans of the American army, and that, although he could crush them, the victory would leave him in no condition for the defense of Monterey.* No other demonstration was therefore made than to keep Torreon's cavalry in observation of the Americans.

Ampudia arrived with a large re-enforcement, and assumed the command, on the 28th of August. His first steps were to issue decrees which threatened every native and every foreigner with death who should afford assistance to, or who should in any manner correspond with, the enemy.† Upon hearing of Taylor's advance from Serralvo, on the 15th of September he issued another proclamation, calling upon the American soldiers to desert, promising them good treatment and rewards, and assistance for their march into the interior of the country.‡ All alcaldes and Mexican citizens were ordered to assist the deserters, if as-

* Mejia's Official Correspondence, published in Mexico.

† General Worth to Major Bliss, September 3, 1846, inclosing the proclamation of Ampudia. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 420, 421.

‡ General Taylor to the Adjutant General, inclosing the circular and address of Ampudia. Idem, p. 422, 423.

sured that they came in good faith ; but so much discretion was allowed in the order that it would have been a matter of extreme hazard for any to have trusted themselves to Mexican clemency. The inducements, such as they were, were set forth in hand-bills, which were strewed along the line of march of the American army. They had but little effect, however, for there were few who chose to leave their colors to engage in a service as precarious and thankless as that of Mexico.

CHAPTER V.

Monterey—Its Locality—Defenses—Garrison—American Force—Plan of Attack—Movement of Worth's Division to turn the Town—Demonstration on the East in Favor—Operations of the 21st on the East of Monterey—On the West—Inactivity on the East on the 22d—Operations on the West of the same Day—Advance into the Town from the East on the 23d—Withdrawal of the Troops—Advance into the Town from the West—Offer of Mexican General to capitulate—Negotiations—Convention of Monterey—Observations.

MONTEREY, the capital of the state of Nueva Leon, lies in a valley at the eastern base of the Sierra Madre. The valley, though not large, is of great fertility, and supports a considerable population. On its east rises the single elevation of the Saddle Mountain, and the main chain of the Sierra and its spurs are the boundaries on the southern, western, and part of the northern limits. The main road from the Rio Grande to the capital of

Mexico leads from the east, through a cultivated country, some distance to the north of the Saddle Mountain, and, passing through the city, continues on by a pass, varying from one to three miles in width, through the Sierra, past Saltillo, and on to the desert country between the latter place and San Luis de Potosi. A rivulet, the Rio San Juan de Monterey, rises in this pass, and, running eastward, traverses the valley.

Monterey stands on the northern bank of this rivulet, and extends in its length near a mile and a half along the stream. It contains ordinarily about ten thousand inhabitants, and that number was probably within its limits at the time of the approach of the Americans, exclusive of the army which had been assembled for its protection.

The defensive works around the city had accumulated during the period of American inactivity succeeding the battles of the 8th and 9th of May and the occupation of Matamoras, and, although they were in great degree irregular, they had a formidable strength. Directly to the north of the town, at the junction of three roads, that from the east by Marin, and two from Pesqueria Grande and Monclova, was the citadel, a square bastioned work, with dry ditches and embrasures for thirty-four guns. It, however, mounted but ten or twelve of all calibers, from fours to eighteens. Within it, the walls of an unfinished Cathedral rose some thirty feet from the ground, and were of sufficient strength to protect troops from any distant fire.

Around the top of these walls was placed a parapet of fascines, which afforded a good position whence musketry could be delivered against an assaulting force. The ditches of the citadel were not completely finished in front of the curtains, nor were they at any place more than twelve feet wide.

The distance from this work to the closely-built part of the town was about one thousand yards, but within that the space was filled with squares containing gardens inclosed by hedges and irrigating ditches, and built up with scattered huts. From a point south of the citadel a branch of the Rio San Juan ran through the suburb in a southeasterly direction, and emptied into that rivulet beyond the town. Its banks were in many places steep and difficult, and deep irrigating ditches extended for much of its length along the northern side. The branch was crossed at a point near the middle of its course through the suburb by the bridge of La Purisima, which was defended by a strong tête du pont. Two breast-works along its southern bank opposed the passage of the lower part of the stream.

The southeastern front of the town was defended by a system of lunettes, well arranged for flanking purposes, and with ground between them almost impracticable, on account of the hedges and bramble by which it was covered. Fort Teneria, the most advanced of these, covered by its fire the roads from Marin and Cadereita, and mounted four guns. Fort El Diablo, to its southwest, mounted

three, and a third, still further toward the rivulet, four. Each of these commanded the lunettes more advanced, and the system terminated in a lunette having a high command, and covering the fords across the river.

The approaches to all of the fortifications on the southeastern front of the city were so masked by shrubbery that accurate reconnaissance was exceedingly difficult.

From the most southern lunette a line of barricades extended along the northern bank of the San Juan for many squares, and, turning at right angles, encircled the strongest buildings, and connected with the tête du pont of La Purisima. Each barricade was strongly and regularly constructed, with embrasures for one or more guns, and the tops of the neighboring houses were covered by parapets of sand-bags. The streets leading to the west were barricaded beyond the main line, and the Campo Santo, a strong stone inclosure in the Plaza de la Capilla, which was traversed by these streets, was prepared for defense. The walls had been fortified to resist cannon shot, and were plentifully crenelled for musketry, with embrasures for guns at the angles.

Immediately beyond the town and to the north of the main road to Saltillo lay the Loma d'Independencia. Half way up the acclivity were the massive ruins of the Obispado, which had been fortified with a view of covering a retreat from the city, if it should be necessary. Its battlements

were furnished with a sand-bag parapet, and the city front was covered by a priest-cap work, with platforms for four guns in barbette. A branch road turned to the southwest as the main road left the city, and, crossing the San Juan, traversed a range of hills which lay along the southern bank of the river. At the summit lay Fort Soldado, a rudely-constructed square redoubt. The hills extended northwest to the river, where they were terminated by the Loma de Federacion, the steep declivity of which reached to its banks, and to the southeast beyond the town to the main chain of the Sierra. Between the citadel and the Obispado a system of redoubts had been commenced, but not completed. The ground in that direction, however, was difficult, on account of the many hedges and irrigating ditches by which it was traversed.

For some distance around the citadel, the country on the north and east of Monterey was open, or covered with low chaparral. To the east the ground was broken by quarry pits; but beyond the open ground, both on the north and east, there extended large corn-fields and heavy shrubbery.

For the defense of the place, General Ampudia had over 10,000 men, of which 7000 were of the line. His precise numerical strength it is difficult to ascertain. It was at one time announced in the city of Mexico that he commanded 13,750 regular troops; but this was undoubtedly an exaggeration. The accounts of the strength of the different corps as they arrived at Monterey, published in Mexico,

made the aggregate of regulars over 7000, and that was admitted to have been the number of his troops at a subsequent period. Generals Mejia, Ortega, and Garcia Conde each commanded brigades of infantry ; General Requena had a large corps of artillerists ; Torrejon had his strong force of regular cavalry ; and to all these were added many citizens and rancheros, which swelled the numerical strength to, at the lowest estimate, 10,000 men.

The town was plentifully supplied with ammunition, and in the various batteries and positions forty-two guns of different calibers were mounted. Subsistence, beef cattle, and sheep, for some days, had been introduced into the city, and the attacking force was known to be too small to invest it so completely as to prevent the introduction of more, or the foraging of the cavalry.

Under all these circumstances, with his superiority in numbers, his armament, and the strength of his position, General Ampudia was confident of success, and did not choose to avail himself of the discretionary power with which Santa Anna's order had clothed him, to abandon the town and fall back on Saltillo and San Luis de Potosi.

The American army which marched from Marin on the morning of the 18th of September numbered 425 officers and 6220 men. Two regiments of volunteers and a battalion of regulars were of cavalry, and Twiggs's, Worth's, and Butler's divisions constituted the infantry of the command.

Of artillery there were four light batteries (each of three six pounders and one twelve pounder howitzer), one of two twenty-four pounder howitzers, and, in addition, the ordnance officers had in charge for transport a ten-inch mortar and one hundred shells.*

The various contradictions in the accounts received of the state of things at Monterey had shaken the confidence of General Taylor in even the most authentic; and, notwithstanding the evident hostility of the Mexican cavalry pickets, their slow retreat, and the proclamations of Ampudia found along the road, he even doubted whether any resistance would be made to his occupation of the city. He underrated the force of his enemy, and on the 17th wrote to the Secretary of War from Marin that his "regular force was small—say 3000—eked out to perhaps 6000 by volunteers, many of them forced."†

But, at eight o'clock on the morning of the 19th, General Taylor arrived, with the advanced guard, within about fifteen hundred yards of the citadel of Monterey. The display of the Mexican flag, a large corps of cavalry in the plain, and a few well-directed shots, dispelled all doubts which had been entertained concerning resistance, and the advanced guard was at once withdrawn out of range, while the general returned to the grove of San Do-

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 88.

† Letter to Secretary Marcy. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 422.





OPERATIONS AT MONTEREY.

Sep 20, 21, 22, & 23, 1846.

mingo, some three miles from the city, where the army was halted and the attack was arranged.

During the afternoon reconnoitering parties were sent to examine the direct approaches and the defenses on the east, and one party over the country to the north of the city, with a view of discovering a route by which the obstacles presented by the citadel and eastern fortifications could be turned, and an attack be made directly against the commanding elevations immediately to the south and west. Of these, the Loma d'Independencia, with the fortifications of the Obispado, were the most prominent, as well as nearest the town; and it was evident that there was the key to the city and fortifications of Monterey. The reconnoitering officers returned in the evening, and from their reports it was deemed to be practicable to turn the works in either direction, by the north or south. But the northern reconnaissance had been conducted so far by Major Mansfield that it was known that the road was practicable in that direction, and it was deemed probable that a position might be gained whence to attack the Loma d'Independencia, if not one upon the Saltillo road in rear of the city. On the morning of the 20th, the plan of attack was determined upon and its execution ordered.

General Worth was directed to move his division through the corn-fields to the north of the town, to turn the positions of the enemy, to penetrate, if possible, to the Saltillo road, to cut his line of re-

treat, and intercept re-enforcements from the interior, should any such appear, and to storm and carry every work and position on the west of Monterey which it was practicable to carry. Some intention was entertained of moving Butler's division to the south of the town; but the order was not issued, and, with Twiggs's division, Butler's kept its camp at the wood of San Domingo.

Worth marched with his division and Colonel Hays's regiment of Western Texans at two o'clock in the afternoon, and, turning to the right a short distance from the wood, traversed the corn-fields to the north of the town. His march was necessarily slow, but he reached the Pesqueria Grande road a short time before sundown, and halted his division on the west of it, while in person he proceeded to reconnoiter further in the direction of the Saltillo road. Supported by a squadron of Texans, his party proceeded by a path leading from the road of Pesqueria Grande to that of Saltillo, which wound around the base of the mountains of the Sierra, rising directly upon its right. On the left, cultivated fields, covered with a dense growth of corn, and divided by hedges and ditches, extended to the base of the Loma d'Independencia, distant some twelve hundred yards from the nearest point of the path. By ascending the eminences on the right, Worth obtained a view of the continuation of the path to the junction with the Saltillo road, of the positions of the Loma de Federacion, and of Fort Soldado on its extended crest.

While he was engaged in the reconnaissance, the enemy, who had early observed his whole movement, and had occupied the summit of the Loma d'Independencia with a strong battalion, brought up a howitzer from the Obispado to a sand-bag battery upon the summit, and opened fire upon the reconnoitering party. A strong corps of infantry at the same time descended the hill, skirted its base, and struck across the fields with the apparent intention of cutting it off. Worth descended from the eminence which he had occupied, and was returning to his division, when the Mexican skirmishers, running forward, opened a rattling fire of musketry and escopetas. The Texans, not very well disciplined, were unused to receiving even a distant discharge without reply, and soon became restive. In spite of the orders of the general and staff, they quickened their pace, passed the general, and fell back upon the division at a gallop, in confusion, but without loss.

The main body of the troops was moved a short distance in advance from the road of Pesqueria Grande, where it was halted and bivouacked. The night set in dark and rainy, and in the difficult positions any movement on either side was apparently impracticable. Nevertheless, a few Mexican skirmishers, attracted by the noise made by the Texans, who were in front, crept up and delivered their fire, which, though ineffectual, put a stop to the shouting, and brought the Rangers to their arms. But the skirmishers retired immediately,

and for the rest of the night the division was undisturbed.

While these movements were progressing, reconnoitering officers had been in observation of the eastern front of the town, and observed the Mexican re-enforcements directed to the Obispado, and the occupation of the Loma d'Independencia. To prevent an accumulation of the Mexican force upon Worth's command, Taylor drew out Butler's and Twiggs's divisions, and displayed them in front of the city until dark, at the same time sending word to Worth that his movement was observed.* The enemy made no other demonstration than that of re-enforcing his western positions, and although Worth at the time was entirely detached, and some five miles from the main army, no effort was made to intercept the communication. The officer who bore General Taylor's note reached him shortly after dark with a small escort, and returned with his answer, giving the result of his reconnaissance, and of his determination to press on. Worth had seen the action of the enemy before the receipt of the dispatch, but, in answer to it, he stated that he believed that his further advance would be disputed in force, and recommended that a strong diversion should be made on the east of the city. The suggestion was adopted by General Taylor.*

To assist in the demonstration to be made on

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 83.

† Idem ibidem.

the following morning, the siege-mortar and twenty-four pounder howitzers were placed in position upon the right of the main road, whence to annoy the citadel.* It could hardly have been expected to effect any thing more than an annoyance, for the distance selected was over twelve hundred yards from the works, and so much had been said about the want of transportation that the chief ordnance officer had neglected to transport a platform for the mortar, and none charged with locating it availed themselves of the timber in the wood of San Domingo to construct one. The mortar was accordingly placed on tolerably firm soil at the bottom of a quarry pit. The howitzers, for which the range was too great for effect, were planted in its vicinity; and in this manner every thing in the shape of siege artillery which was with the American army was disposed of.

On the following morning the dispositions for the demonstration in favor of Worth's movement were commenced at early dawn. Lieutenant-colonel May was sent to re-enforce him with the battalion of the second dragoons, and soon after Governor Henderson, with the regiment of Eastern Texans, marched for the same object. Twiggs's division, under command of Lieutenant-colonel Garland, was ordered forward to the position of the batteries, leaving one company from each regiment as a camp guard. Upon its arrival, the fourth

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 83.

regiment of infantry was detached to cover the battery, and Garland was directed to move with his remaining troops, the first and third regiments of infantry, a battalion of Maryland and District of Columbia volunteers, and Bragg's field battery, toward the lower part of the town, to make a strong demonstration, and, if thought practicable, to carry any of the small forts with which he might fall in.* Major Mansfield and other engineer officers accompanied his column, and were charged with selecting and designating points of attack. Butler's division was, at the same time, ordered forward from the camp to the batteries, which, as Garland moved off, commenced their fire. They made no impression upon the citadel whatever, for the range was too great for the howitzers, and the mortar, being without a platform, was driven so far into the ground by the recoil of two or three discharges, that it became perfectly useless. After a few experiments at this novel kind of mortar practice, the attempt was given up, and its fire ceased from that direction altogether. The howitzers continued a desultory cannonade, but the Mexicans replied from the citadel with heavier metal and better aim; and although neither party did much damage to the other in this quarter, yet it was evident that the American batteries were hardly effective even for annoyance.

When Garland's division moved from the posi-

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4; House of Representatives, second Session of the 29th Congress, p. 84.

tion of the batteries, Major Mansfield, with other reconnoitering officers, having two companies of infantry as the immediate escort, advanced into the suburbs of the town in search of a point of attack, and, after a short reconnaissance, sent a request to Garland to come forward. Whether he intended that he should come forward in person, to examine the position, or that he should move up his troops to engage them, Garland understood him in the latter sense. While Mansfield had been employed in reconnaissance, Garland had halted the main body of his command out of range. Upon receiving the message, he moved forward in line, keeping to the left of the main road.* By following the route which Mansfield had pursued, he gave his right flank to the citadel, while Fort Teneria was upon his left and front. The latter of these works soon opened heavily upon the command, and the citadel followed its example with a destructive enfilading fire. Still the Americans moved steadily forward until reaching the scattered buildings and inclosures of the suburb, which broke their formation; but, although in confusion, the advance was rapidly continued, for it was thought that Fort Teneria might be turned, and taken in reverse. The Mexican fire from both citadel and Fort Teneria was kept up with vigor, and as the command approached the rivulet through the suburb, the masked breast-works on its southern bank received it with another destructive fire,

* Henry's Campaign Sketches, p. 194.

which increased the confusion. Neither officers nor men knew any thing of their position.* Mansfield, who had led the assault when the troops had reached him, although wounded, pressed on, pointing out positions for attack, and there was no lack of brave officers to lead or brave men to follow; but from the gardens, from the neighboring rooftops, as well as from the masked breast-works, an unseen foe pelted the troops with musketry, while the heavy fire from Fort Teneria and the citadel kept rolling in on their flanks. Movements against a seemingly practicable point only brought a greater slaughter, and after many officers and men had fallen, still ignorant of their locality, the troops paused, and finally took shelter in a neighboring street.† Although the mass of the command had kept boldly to its work during the assault, the greater portion of the battalion of Maryland and District of Columbia volunteers had early left its colors and fled beyond the range of fire. The lieutenant-colonel, Watson, three officers, and some seventy men, remained to sustain the honor of their corps; and Watson fell.

In the mean while, Bragg's battery had been advanced into the suburb, and had opened, but a few discharges proved the inefficiency of his guns in the position. His men and horses fell rapidly under the fire of the unseen enemy, and against the heavier metal of Fort Teneria in embrasure he was powerless; and, finally, this first attempt

* Henry's Campaign Sketches, p. 194.

† Idem, p. 195.

at a demonstration was consummated by the whole command being ordered to fall back out of range.* But this movement was not effected without further loss, for a body of lancers, of which many hovered about the field, came down on two detached companies, killed two officers and many men, and drove the remainder, in confusion, to the main body.

The fortunes of the day had thus far been entirely with the Mexicans; but, in the confusion of the assaults, two companies of the first infantry, under Captains Backus and Lamotte, had extended to the left, and seized a tannery, which sheltered them from the enemy's fire, and in the yard of which was a shed looking directly into the gorge of Fort Teneria. A distillery in the vicinity had been fortified with sand-bag parapets, and was strongly garrisoned by the enemy, who opened thence a heavy fire upon Backus's command. Lamotte had fallen wounded, and as it was impracticable to retire with any security while the enemy held the distillery, attention was first given to that point. After a sharp firing, the Mexicans retired from the azotea, and Backus was about to retreat and rejoin the main body of the division, for he had just learned that it had been ordered back out of range.†

When the discharges of artillery and the rapid fire of small arms about Fort Teneria had an-

* Henry's Campaign Sketches, p. 195.

† Idem, p. 195, 196, and Official Report of General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 85.

nounced to General Taylor that Garland had become warmly engaged, he ordered the fourth regiment of infantry and three regiments of Butler's division to move at once by the left flank in the direction of the conflict, and support the assault. The first Kentucky regiment remained to guard the battery.*

In the confusion of affairs, but three companies of the fourth received the order at first, and these moved at once boldly to the assault, and direct upon Fort Teneria. Coming rapidly forward, they opened a fire of musketry upon that work; but every gun was turned upon them, and one third of the officers and men fell at the first discharge; the remainder staggered and fell back for support.†

General Butler had meanwhile ordered forward Quitman's brigade, and advanced with the Ohio regiment of Hamer's in the direction of the conflict. The movement of these troops was also under the flank fire of the citadel, from which they suffered much annoyance; but, feeling their way, they gradually advanced. General Butler, following the route of Garland's command, entered the suburb, and, having advanced several squares, met Major Mansfield, who still lingered upon the field, and from him learned of the failure of the attack and the impracticable nature of the Mexican position.‡ Taylor in the mean while had come up,

* Official Report of General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 85.

† Idem Idem, p. 85. ‡ Gen. Butler's Official Report. Idem, p. 91.

and, learning the state of affairs in that quarter, ordered a retrograde movement; but it had not been commenced when information of success about Fort Teneria caused the order to be rescinded.*

For when the fire of the fourth infantry had opened in its front, Backus had determined to hold on to his position. Occupying the roof of the shed, his men poured a stream of musketry into the gorge of the lunette, which told with effect upon the crowded mass of the Mexican garrison, and some portion of it commenced a precipitate retreat. The companies of the fourth having fallen back, there was for a time no assaulting force in front of the work, and the greater number of the garrison remained until Quitman's brigade, which, although suffering severely from the fire of the citadel, advanced rapidly against the position. When within one hundred yards the volunteers broke into a run, rushed forward with loud shouts, and entered the lunette over the parapet. The garrison, galled by Backus's fire, fled before their assault, abandoning the armament of five guns and their ammunition, and the volunteers followed so fast that no time was afforded for resistance from the distillery, in which thirty persons were captured.

So soon as the event was known, fragments of the different regiments, and Bragg's and Ridgely's field batteries, were collected about the captured work. General Taylor determined to hold

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 85.

his position in the town, and attempts were made to advance. General Butler first led the Ohio regiment to the left of the former attack, with the intention of assaulting Fort Diablo; but that work was stoutly defended, and could not immediately be taken. Butler accordingly fell back, but not until he had been wounded and lost many men.*

Meanwhile Taylor had ordered the main force of the first division (still under Garland, although General Twiggs had come up from the camp to the captured work) to extend to the right and endeavor to penetrate the town, with the idea of making way by an extended circuit to the rear of Fort Diablo.† This was attempted, and, although severely cut up by the fire of the Mexicans as they crossed the streets, especially from the tête du pont of La Purisima, the troops passed beyond the bridge head, and, although in confusion, entered the yards of the street next the rivulet, driving the Mexicans from the adjacent houses; but further advance was impracticable. Directly in front lay a street swept by the fire of the tête du pont, and beyond, the deep ditches and high banks of the rivulet; while the Mexicans occupied the parapet of the bridge and a low wall which extended on the southern bank, whence they plied their musketry with unceasing vigor. But still the officers, though falling with the men at every mo-

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 85.

† Idem. Idem, p. 85.

ment, called on them to maintain their ground, while they searched in vain for a practicable point to pass the stream. Captain Ridgely brought up a section of his battery, but his fire was ineffectual against that of the heavy metal of the enemy from behind his parapets, and the battle in this quarter continued without any advantage to the Americans. The Mexicans were nevertheless pressed closely, and a heavy battalion of infantry, from the interior of the town, was sent to support the garrison of the tête du pont. It came down the street leading to the bridge, but before it could gain shelter it had to pass under the American fire from the houses and yards on the northern bank of the stream, which was delivered with so much effect that the column was driven back into the town. The Mexican artillery was then placed in position to bear upon the Americans, and, opening from the distance, beat through the walls of the houses and yards, whence they delivered their fire, and rendered the position untenable. After a continued occupation of the exposed point, the attempt to pass the rivulet was given up as impracticable, and the troops were withdrawn to Fort Teneria.

While the various operations had taken place in the suburbs, the Mexican lancers had made many demonstrations of attacking the American troops in rear and cutting up the camp guard at the wood of San Domingo, though none of the demonstrations had been serious except that upon the detached companies of Garland's retreating command.

The main body of the lancers had come down at one time upon the Ohio and Mississippi regiments, which had been withdrawn from Fort Teneria, but those regiments had fallen back against a chaparral fence, whence they had delivered a fire, and the lancers had retreated. Bragg's battery was sent in that direction from the captured work, and a few discharges effectually dispersed them. The captured guns of Fort Teneria were served from time to time upon Fort Diablo, until one of the howitzers was brought forward from the first position of the batteries. But the principal operations of the day upon the eastern front of Monterey were finished. During the afternoon the main body of the troops remained in and about the captured work, collecting the dead and wounded, and strengthening the position. The enemy made no direct attempt to dislodge them, but kept up a cannonade from Fort Diablo whenever any were exposed, which was replied to from the howitzer and with musketry. A movement of lancers on the southern bank of the San Juan beyond the town was opposed by Ridgely's battery, and a few shots drove them back. When night fell, the first, third, and fourth infantry and Ridgely's guns were detailed to guard the captured work, and the remaining troops were ordered to the camp at the wood of San Domingo.

The operations upon the eastern side of Monterey of the 20th of September had resulted in the capture of Fort Teneria, and the repulse of the American troops in their first attempt upon that

work, in the advance upon Fort Diablo, and in the attempt to turn it by passing the rivulet to the right of the bridge of La Purisima. The strong demonstration had been effected, and one point of Mexican defense had been gained. But 394 had fallen, killed or wounded, including one general officer, eight field officers, seven captains, and eighteen subalterns. The effect of the operations, notwithstanding the partial success, had been to dampen the spirits of both officers and men, and to weaken their moral force. The confused nature of the movements, the ground over which they extended, and the necessity of passing and repassing under the flank fire of the citadel, had made the duties of the day not only severe in the actual conflict, but harassing and fatiguing throughout.

The movement of the cavalry to the support of General Worth had not been effected. Lieutenant-colonel May arrived in the vicinity of the Loma d'Independencia in the morning, but, from the fire of the guns upon its summit, he judged that to pass it with cavalry would be impracticable. Neither did he conceive that he could with safety charge through the streets of the suburbs west of the citadel, as he had instructions to do from General Taylor; and, when Governor Henderson came up with the Eastern Texan regiment, May came under his command. Henderson suspended any movement until he could communicate with the commanding general, and received orders soon after to return to the main body of the army. But the cav-

alry arrived too late to take any active part in the operations of the day upon the east.

The Mexican reveillé aroused Worth's division at daylight on the morning of the 21st, and it was immediately prepared for the advance. The small train which accompanied it was parked in an inclosure of adobe walls surrounding the scattered huts in the vicinity of the bivouac, and the fifth regiment of infantry, with one section of Mackall's battery, was detailed as its guard. The remainder of the division moved on by the path which had been reconnoitered the previous evening.

Hays's regiment of mounted Texans marched in advance, in close order, over the ground, which at some places afforded room for the extension of cavalry, and again narrowed down to a defile. In its rear, Captain C. F. Smith's battalion of light infantry was deployed as skirmishers across the road covering the front of the division, which marched in close formation.

As the advanced Texans neared the Saltillo road, upon turning a spur of the mountains they came upon the Mexican regiment of Guanajuato lancers, which, with its supporting infantry, occupied the junction of the roads, and was in readiness to dispute the passage. The Mexican force numbered in all near 1500 men, and the cavalry at once commenced forming for a charge. The Texans halted, deployed, moved down to the left of the path, and entered a corn-field, where two

companies dismounted, and took post in ambush behind the thick fence of the field. Captain M'Culloch's company, not having received the order for this movement, advanced in a scrambling charge to meet the enemy, who by this time had formed, and was coming down with lances in rest at a sweeping gallop. A short conflict ensued, and the Texans, having inflicted some loss upon the enemy, fell back, with two men severely wounded. The lancers pursued, and, turning the hill, came upon Smith's battalion, which was still advancing in open order. The skirmishers opened a scattering fire, but the lancers came on with apparent good will and determination until they had presented their flank to the Texans in the corn-field, when the rifles were opened with deadly effect. Thirty saddles were emptied at the instant. Lieutenant Hays brought up a gun, with which he poured in a fire of canister over the heads of the skirmishers, the first brigade deployed across the road and advanced, the Texans kept up their rifle practice, and, finally, the lancers, sorely cut up, gave back, and, in spite of the efforts of their officers, were soon in full flight. The Texans, the light battalion, and Duncan's guns pursued, and prevented many fugitives from gaining the Saltillo road. These attempted to escape over the mountain on the right, but were soon shot, with the exception of the lieutenant colonel, Don Juan Najira, who had led the charge. In spite of wounds, he refused to surrender, and struggled on, until, at

length, he too fell from his horse, and rolled, dead, down the slope of the mountain.

The Mexican infantry fell back without firing, and Worth continued his march to the Saltillo road. Here he halted, sent the light battalion through the fields to the west of the Loma de Federacion, advanced the artillery battalion and a party of the Texans along the road to the west, located a battery at the junction, and sent the remainder of his force to the rear, to increase the escort of the train which was ordered forward.

While it was advancing, Duncan's battery was planted on the slope of the mountain north of the Saltillo road, and opened fire upon the Mexican infantry, a portion of which had retreated up the Loma de Federacion. The enemy brought up two nine pounders from Fort Soldado and replied, killing one or two horses. The range was too great for light six pounders, and the American battery was withdrawn to the road. When there, the Mexican fire against it was so depressed as to be almost harmless. But the train was exposed, in its advance, to the fire from the Loma de Federacion and from the Loma d'Independencia (the enemy having increased his battery on the summit of the latter by a twelve pounder), which killed an officer and five men of the escort. To secure it, as well as to take up a position which could be easily defended from an attack from front or rear, it was advanced, when it came out on the Saltillo road, to a sugar-house some hundred yards to the west,

and beyond range.* The house was immediately crenelled for musketry, and occupied by two companies. The field batteries were drawn back to the position, and planted to sweep both approaches. The wagons and pack mules were parked in a field below the road, covered by their fire, and the second brigade, facing to the east, stretched up the side of the mountain. The first brigade, which, while this position had been taken, had been deployed, facing to the east, in a corn-field beneath the Loma de Federacion, and the light battalion, which had returned without meeting an enemy, were drawn back. The artillery battalion was posted in advance of the train, the eighth infantry, in column, along the road between the two batteries, and parties of Texans were thrown out in front and rear, while their main body took post in rear of the second brigade.

The first object of the movement had been gained, and the division was in strong position on the Saltillo road, in rear of Monterey. Worth's attention was immediately directed to the assault of the Loma de Federacion, and a select party was detailed for the service. Four companies of the artillery battalion, under Captain Smith, with a like number of Texans (who were dismounted for the service), under Major Chevalier, in all numbering three hundred effectives, composed the party. Smith had the direction of the movement, as Chev-

* General Worth's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 103.

alier, at Worth's request, had waived his rank in favor of the regular officer, and at twelve o'clock the command left the position at the sugar-house. It moved through the corn-fields, in the direction of the hill, for some time without being observed; but as it approached the River San Juan the enemy on the summit discovered the movement, and at once opened a plunging fire of grape and canister. The elevation of the hill was, however, too great for the effective use of artillery, and the shot, for the most part, flew harmlessly over the heads of the assailants, who moved on, crossed the San Juan, and, having occupied the rocks around the base of the hill, were halted to allow a reconnoissance. In the mean time the enemy had advanced a strong battalion from Fort Soldado, which commenced a noisy fire from the summit, but the assailants were protected by the rocks, and the fire was still harmless. To obtain a more effective aim, a cloud of skirmishers descended the slope, and the whole hill-side was soon covered by the smoke of their musketry. Finding so large a force opposed to him, Captain Smith delayed the assault, to allow time for the approach of support. Worth had, from the position at the sugar-house, observed the state of affairs, and sent the seventh regiment of infantry to sustain the assault, and soon after ordered Colonel P. F. Smith to follow with the fifth regiment, and, if practicable, to carry Fort Soldado. The seventh, keeping to the right of Captain Smith's route, arrived on the west of the hill before that officer

knew of its approach, and a small party was thrown in advance to divert the attention of the enemy. A note directed to Captain Miles, who commanded the seventh, fell into the hands of Smith, who, being thus informed of his vicinity, at once made his dispositions, and commenced the ascent.

The hill-side was rocky and difficult, and the Mexican skirmishers, still keeping up an uninterrupted fire, occupied the crags and bushes of one half the distance from the summit. The American regulars advanced by the heads of companies, and on either flank the Texans, in loose order, plied their rifles with deadly effect. The Mexicans fell back upon the hill before the advance, the regulars deployed and opened fire, the pace increased, and as the Americans rushed with a shout over the crest, the enemy was in full flight to Fort Soldado. One gun had been removed from the position, and the other, which had been overturned in the rocky path, was abandoned. The Americans, coming on in pursuit, pelted the fugitives in their retreat, seized and righted the abandoned gun, and directed it against the redoubt.

Colonel Smith, having arrived with the fifth infantry at the base of the hill during the assault, ordered the seventh regiment to advance. The two regiments, moving along the western slope, came up at a charging pace, and entered over the low parapet of Fort Soldado before the Mexicans had recovered from the confusion of the retreat from the Loma de Federacion. They fled

with precipitation down the hill toward the city, leaving their nine pounder in the work, and parties of Americans, of different regiments, shouting and firing, followed after. But the Mexican batteries in front of the Obispado opened to cover the retreat, and the pursuers were quickly recalled, while the captured guns were turned on the Mexican works and replied.

The fifth regiment was extended along the ridge to the southeast, the seventh remained at Fort Soldado, and Captain Smith's command retained the position which it had carried on the summit of the Loma de Federacion. So soon as the position had been captured, that at the sugar-house was abandoned by the remaining troops of the division, which, with the artillery and train, moved up to the gorge at the foot of the captured hill, and bivouacked for the night.

At that moment the scene was beautifully grand. A heavy storm was just rising over the high peaks of the Sierra Madre, while the cannonade between the hills of Federacion and Independencia enveloped each height in smoke; the Mexican troops crowned the summit of their hill above the cloud; Worth's division, with its train, was taking position in the defile; and, to heighten the effect, the echoes of the artillery rolled in a thousand reverberations through the valley. But the night soon set in with a heavy rain, the cannonade ceased, and the whole was shrouded in darkness.

The effect of the operations of the 20th on the

west of Monterey had been to close the retreat of the enemy, to beat him severely in two attacks, and to secure an important position which looked into the rear of the town. This had been accomplished with but little loss to the American soldiers, and their spirits rose with their uninterrupted success; while the Mexicans had seen their cavalry shamefully beaten, and the positions on the Loma de Federacion wrested from them with comparative ease; and their confidence could have been in no way increased by the events of the day upon the west.

On the morning of the 22d the garrison of Fort Diablo reopened a fire upon the American troops about the captured work, which it kept up throughout the day, whenever any were exposed to view. The fire was occasionally returned, but no offensive operation was undertaken on that day by the American forces on the east of Monterey.* At mid-day General Quitman's brigade marched from the camp, under the flank fire of the citadel, to relieve the guard of Fort Teneria. This, in its turn, was exposed to the same fire, and, in its march to camp, lost several men in killed and wounded. During the afternoon it was reported that the enemy was assembling in force upon the plain, and the troops in camp were drawn out under arms; but it proved to be a false alarm. To oppose any demonstration which might be made by the cavalry,

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 86.

Bragg's battery was put in position, where it remained until nightfall.

About the position of Fort Teneria, the occasional cannonade was kept up on both sides ; but, in general, Mexicans as well as Americans were quiet, and appeared to await the result of the operations upon the west, which had early in the day been continued so successfully on the part of the Americans that the fall of Monterey was no longer problematical.

During the night of the 21st Worth had organized a party of three companies of the artillery battalion and three companies of the eighth infantry under Lieutenant-colonel Childs, and two hundred Texans under Colonel Hays, for the assault of the Loma d'Independencia. The direction of affairs was given to Childs, as it had been to Smith in the attack upon the opposite height ; and, to favor the operation, Colonel Smith was directed to advance a party from Fort Soldado in the direction of the enemy at the commencement of the assault. At three o'clock in the morning Childs marched from the bivouac at the defile, and, having secured the services of some Mexican guides, silently took position at the northwestern base of the hill. There three companies under Captain Vinton, and a party of Texans, were detached to gain the northeastern base, and to ascend from that direction. The weather was rainy and dark, no pickets had been posted by the Mexicans around the base, and

the positions were accordingly taken without exciting their attention. Childs waited until Vinton's party had time to arrive at the northeast, and at the first break of day commenced the ascent. He met with no resistance until near the summit, when the enemy, being aroused, delivered a volley which cut down the leading files of his command; but the soldiers answered with a cheer, and delivering their fire, directed by the Mexican flashes, rushed on. Vinton's party, which on the other side had nearly arrived at the summit, commenced the charge with a shout, and the Mexicans, bewildered and beaten, fled down the hill to the Obispado. They carried with them the howitzer which had been in battery upon the summit, and attempted to secure the twelve pounder; but, in the confusion of the retreat, this was impracticable, and they therefore cast it down the declivity, breaking its wheels, and rendering it for the time useless. While the assault continued, the attention of the garrison of the Obispado had been attracted by the noisy cheers of three companies of the seventh infantry, which descended from Fort Soldado, and in that manner announced their advance. The Mexican guns opened upon them with grape, but the fire, delivered in the darkness, was harmless, and the object having been gained, the party retired up the hill.

When the action about the Loma d'Independencia had fairly commenced, Worth sent Lieutenant-colonel Staniford with three companies of the first infantry to the support of Childs. Staniford ar-

rived at the base of the hill soon after the summit had been gained, and made the ascent without other opposition than the distant flank fire of the Obispado. The dispositions for holding the position had already been made. Four companies, under Captain Vinton, were posted in the advance, among the rocks on each declivity, each wing being accompanied by a party of Texans. The remaining troops occupied the summit of the hill about the captured Mexican battery.

Although daylight had fairly broken, a mist hung about the whole position, which rendered a reconnaissance of the Obispado for a time impracticable. A party of officers attempted it, and approached in the obscurity to within a few yards, when the mist suddenly rose and discovered them to the enemy. He put a stop to the reconnaissance by a heavy discharge of canister and musketry, which sent the officers back to the position of the advanced pickets.

In the mean while the fifth regiment had been ordered down from the position near Fort Soldado, and, ascending in the rear of the hill, had re-enforced the troops upon the summit, making the whole force present upon the Loma d'Independencia of near 1000 men. The imposing appearance of the Obispado, when viewed from a distance, had led to an exaggerated estimate of its strength, and, in consequence, Worth ordered that its assault should not be immediately attempted. The troops therefore held their position during the morning

under the continued fire of the Mexican garrison, from which they were partially sheltered, and sustained but little loss. The enemy made several demonstrations of an intention of assaulting and retaking the summit, but all of them were commenced with but little vigor, and were quickly repulsed by the fire of the advanced companies.

To assist in the contemplated assault, Lieutenant Roland was sent with a twelve pounder howitzer to the base of the hill,* and it having been raised with much exertion to the summit, an epaulement was constructed with the sand-bags of the Mexican work, and the howitzer placed in battery against the Obispado. A few shots were sent into the windows and embrasures of the ruin, and the Mexican garrison at once commenced preparations for retreat. The cannonade was, however, continued, and a straggling fire kept up between the American advance and the enemy, until about one o'clock in the afternoon. At that time a strong body of cavalry, with an infantry support, took position, with the apparent intention of charging up the ridge and striking a vigorous blow for the victory. Its advance was commenced at a brisk pace, but the arrangements had been made to receive it. Lieutenant Bradford's and Ayers's companies lay on either side of the ridge, along which was the only practicable ascent for cavalry. As the Mexicans advanced, each closed to the left and right, faced

* General Worth's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 105.

quickly to the front, and delivered its fire. It was without much physical effect, delivered as it was in haste and at a depression, but nevertheless the lancers turned from it and fled. Ayers, springing through his company, called upon the soldiers to follow him, but no general direction had been given for the advance, and for a moment they hesitated. Vinton, however, soon ordered them forward, and his command, with the Texans, ran down the hill. As the movement progressed, Childs endeavored to check it, as it was in direct violation of Worth's order; but the soldiers were too near the walls, and Staniford, yielding to the requests of the officers about him, sent from the summit, first a support of four companies, and then gave the order for the whole force to advance, and in a mass it poured down the hill toward the Obispado.

The advanced companies meanwhile had entered. Ayers led through an embrasure, while Bradford kept to the right, and, passing on the west side of the ruin, entered the priest-cap. The main body of the garrison had already left the position, and those who remained made but feeble resistance. The guns had been spiked, but the vent of a howitzer was soon cleared, and, before the fugitives had reached the suburbs of the city at the foot of the hill, its fire was directed on their rear; and, as the main body of the American force arrived, parties of soldiers pushed down the hill in pursuit, using their muskets and rifles until the enemy had gained the shelter of the city.

From the bivouac at the defile Worth had observed the fall of the Obispado, and having ordered forward the troops still at that position, he came up at speed, followed by Duncan's battery. The guns came quickly up the hill, and were planted at once in front of the priest-cap. Worth, after a short observation of a flag upon the citadel, which had been taken by some as one of truce, ordered them to be opened, and the retreating enemy was still further annoyed as he passed the Plaza de la Capilla on his way to the citadel. So soon as he had passed beyond range, the fifth infantry was ordered to return to the heights of the opposite ridge, the train of the division was brought up and parked beneath and to the west of the Obispado, and the positions were taken for the night.

The Loma d'Independencia, with the Obispado, completely commanded the western portion of Monterey, and their possession insured the entrance into the town. The important advantages, like those of the preceding day, gained by Worth's division, had cost comparatively but little. The armament captured in the Obispado was of two nine pounders, a six-inch howitzer, besides the twelve pounder which had been thrown down the declivity, all having a full supply of ammunition, and quite sufficient for the defense of the position against any ordinary attack from the town front, in view of which the place had been originally fortified. The importance of the capture was so well appreciated by the Mexican general, that dur-

ing the night he withdrew his troops from the batteries on the east of the city, and advanced a column of four thousand men with a view to its recovery. His reconnoitering officers, however, on coming out of the town, fell in with the American pickets and drew their fire. The first brigade, and Duncan's and Mackall's artillery men, which were posted about the Obispado, sprang to their arms with a cheer, which was taken up and replied to by the guard on the summit of the hill, as well as the second brigade on the opposite height of Federación. The preparation for battle being thus sternly manifested, the Mexican general gave up his intention of attack, if, indeed, he had ever seriously entertained it, and fell back with his troops to the Grand Plaza of the city.

On the morning of the 23d active operations were resumed upon the east, for at dawn of day Quitman, from Fort Teneria, observed the abandoned works in his vicinity, and, having promptly seized them, sent information to the commanding general. Taylor at once ordered the troops in camp under arms, and gave directions to Quitman to enter the city at his discretion, making his way through the houses and gardens, and sheltering his men as he could.* Quitman ordered Colonel Davis, with the Mississippi regiment of rifles, to advance, who pro-

* General Quitman's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 94, and General Taylor's Official Report. *Idem*, p. 87.

ceeded cautiously, and for some time without opposition. Having approached within short distance of the interior barricades, the Mexicans opened a heavy fire of grape from the barricades and musketry from the house-tops, upon which the troops were ordered under cover of the houses. Quitman then brought forward such portion of the Tennessee regiment as could be spared from the guard of the captured works, and, spreading his troops over several squares, commenced an advance through and over the buildings. While this was progressing, Captain Ridgely, from Fort Teneria, served a captured gun upon the Cathedral, about which the Mexicans were thickly posted, until the advancing troops had gained a position which intercepted his fire. The regiment of Eastern Texans had been ordered up by General Taylor, and, led by Governor Henderson, entered the city, dismounted, at eleven o'clock in the morning. Joining with Davis's riflemen, the two regiments used their rifles with good effect, gradually driving back the enemy in the direction of the Plaza; and the practicability of fighting in a town, which had been before a matter of some doubt in the mind of General Taylor,* having been demonstrated, Bragg's battery, with the third regiment of infantry in support, was ordered from the camp to participate in the battle. The enemy still held possession of the citadel, whence he kept up his flank fire upon

* General Taylor's Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 87.

the passing troops; but this time, the road being clear of obstruction, the battery passed the field of fire at speed, without loss, while the infantry, making a wide circuit, kept out of range, and joined the guns in the city.

The troops in the town had meantime gained a street which led to the Cathedral, but it was barricaded near that building; the Mexicans were in force, and defended the position so stoutly that a speedy advance in that direction was impracticable. As soon as the guns came up, a light six pounder was opened upon the barricade, but it made little or no impression, although served with great rapidity. But by this time the want of concert with Worth had become apparent to General Taylor, and for that reason, and because Quitman's command had been on duty the previous night, he ordered the troops* to abandon the town, and fall back to the works upon its southeastern verge, which they did, and, soon after, those which had been engaged returned again to the camp. Hammer's brigade and Webster's battery took post in Forts Teneria and Diablo and the intervening buildings, relieving the command of General Quitman, which had occupied them on the previous night. Two shells, thrown from Webster's battery, finished the demonstrations of hostility on the east of Monterey, for no further conflict took place, as the Mexicans made no attempt to occupy the por-

* General Taylor's Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 87.

tions of the town which had been won by the Americans only to be abandoned.

Before the troops on the east of the city had become closely engaged, the twelve pounder, which had been thrown down the hill-side on the previous morning, was brought up to the priest-cap in front of the Obispado. Its broken wheels were replaced, and, with the captured howitzer, it was served upon the town, of which the whole western portion was apparently deserted. But, with the Mexican ammunition, no elevation would give a range to the Plaza, at which point the mass of the Mexican force was concentrated, and the fire was soon discontinued. A captured nine pounder had, however, been dragged, by a party of the fifth infantry, along the ridge southeast from Fort Soldado to a position which looked into the square, and from its high command the shot were sent directly into the midst of the enemy.

During the cannonade a flag was displayed at the foot of the Loma d'Independencia, the bearer of which conveyed to General Worth a communication from the governor of the city, asking permission for the women and children to leave the town; but as Worth had no authority to grant or refuse the request, he transmitted it to General Taylor. It was not received by him until late in the day, and, made at the period of the operations at which it was, was deemed inadmissible, and of course refused.

The heavy firing of the enemy from the vicinity of the Cathedral first announced to the troops of Worth's command the advance of their comrades into the eastern portion of the city, and, believing that it had been intended by General Taylor that he should co-operate,* General Worth at once prepared to advance into the town from the west. He first sent a select command of four companies and two guns to the mills of Santa Catarina, a strong position one league toward Saltillo, to obstruct the approach of any re-enforcement to the enemy, of which rumors were still frequent. A company of the fifth infantry was left in position with the nine pounder upon the ridge of Federacion, but the division, with these exceptions, was concentrated about the Obispado. The different commands having been furnished with picks and crowes from a quantity captured in Fort Soldado, and the western portion of the town having been reconnoitered, the advance was ordered, and the movement commenced.

Eight companies, under Lieutenant-colonel Childs, deployed as skirmishers across the width of the town, entered first, and, passing through the scattered houses, and climbing over the garden walls, advanced, without opposition, as far as the Plaza de la Capilla. Lieutenant Mackall followed with a section of his battery, and, throwing the guns into position at the angles of the square, drove back a party of lancers which had come down, apparent-

* General Worth's Report. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 105.

ly in observation, to a barricade a short distance from the Plazuela del Carne, the market square of the town. A portion of the seventh infantry came up under Captain Holmes, and, with some companies of Childs's command and one of the guns, moved along the street on the right, and seized the barricade. The other gun of the section, the remainder of Childs's command, and the main bodies of the third and seventh infantry, took the parallel street on the left, and, under a rattling fire from the house-tops, gained the Plazuela del Carne.

In the mean time, the ten-inch mortar, which had been so unfortunately served on the eastern side, and had been sent to Worth's position, arrived at the Obispado, and was at once sent forward to the Campo Santo, and preparations were made to place it in battery. Two companies were located in the position for its protection; and, having taken care to secure his communication by breaking in the doors of houses and the entrances to the inclosures along the route through the city, with his staff and Duncan's battery Worth came up to the barricade. He directed thence a fire of artillery upon a sand-bag parapet which crowned a house some distance in advance, which soon beat through it, and momentarily stopped a fire which the Mexican troops had delivered from that direction.

The attack upon the eastern side having been suspended, General Ampudia was at liberty to throw the strength of his force against Worth's ap-

proach, and, in a short time, the Mexican troops occupied the barricades and houses which still intervened between the assailants and the Plaza, and swept the streets with showers of grape and musketry. But it was too late, for the assailants had already gained a secure lodgment in the heart of the city, and, when the Mexican fire became destructive, they took to cover in the houses, and commenced cutting their advance through the walls. Hays's regiment was dismounted, and entered the town, where it was stationed in parties on the house-tops in the front. The Texans used their rifles with effect, while the troops of the line pressed on slowly through the buildings; and in this manner, as on the eastern side, the enemy was gradually driven back toward the Grand Plaza.

So soon as the Mexican fire had become heavy in the streets, two of Duncan's guns, and one of Mackall's, were withdrawn to the Campo Santo. A section of the former battery had meanwhile been placed at the foot of a cross street, under cover, to command a ford across the San Juan, opposite the Plaza; and a gun of the latter was left in position in the Plazuela del Carne. During the advance the troops had entered a yard inclosing the beef cattle and sheep which formed part of the commissariat of the Mexican army, and they were at once secured and driven back to the Obispado.

When the action in the town had fairly commenced, the command which had been sent to the mills of Santa Catarina was ordered to return, and,

coming up toward evening, it took post in reserve in the Plaza de la Capilla. The conflict had continued in the front, with heavy rolling volleys down the streets on the part of the Mexicans, whenever a party of Americans or a single staff officer was exposed; but the fire of the assailants was kept up in dropping shots of rifles and muskets from house-tops and windows. As night closed in, the mortar, which had been firmly planted in the Campo Santo, opened, and the artillerists soon getting the range, dropped the shells into the Plaza. The enemy replied from the citadel with a six-inch howitzer; but his aim was bad, and few shells fell even within the Plaza de la Capilla. Nevertheless, the light artillery was drawn back for security.

Having determined to hold his position in the town, and to continue the advance through the night, Worth, before returning in person to the Obispado, stationed the four companies in reserve at points along the road to keep open the communication. But in the night the advance was necessarily slow in the darkness, and the mortar threw but one shell into the Plaza each half hour to annoy the enemy. The Mexican howitzer from the citadel as regularly replied, though without any effect upon the Americans.

At daylight on the morning of the 24th an aide-camp of the Mexican commander presented himself, with a flag, at Fort Diablo. He bore a letter

to General Taylor, which had been written by Ampudia on the previous evening, but of which the danger of approaching the American lines had prevented the delivery. In it the Mexican general submitted propositions for evacuating the town, taking with him all the arms and munitions of war which it contained. General Taylor, who had intended on the previous evening to proceed to Worth's head-quarters to concert a combined attack, and had during the night sent orders to the latter to suspend the advance until his arrival, promptly refused the offer, and demanded the surrender of the whole Mexican army as prisoners of war, and of all the public property in the place. He required an answer to his communication by twelve o'clock on that day, to be delivered at General Worth's head-quarters, whither he started in person.*

Having received the order of General Taylor, and been informed by the Mexican general of the proposed negotiations, Worth's attack had been discontinued early in the morning; but he did not cease his preparations for battle. During the night the troops had occupied a house upon the Plazuela del Carne, the upper story of which was the highest in the town, and from which all the azoteas could be swept to the Grand Plaza. A six pounder was dragged up the staircases, and placed in battery at an embrasure cut through the walls; the

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 348, 349.

howitzer which had been captured in the Obispado was brought down, with a full supply of ammunition, and planted in the yard of the same building, whence it was directed likewise upon the Plaza. The light guns were distributed at different points of the city, commanding the fords of the river and the approaches from the citadel, while officers searched for advantageous positions for the infantry, to be occupied upon the renewal of the engagement. The commissaries traversed the streets with wagons, seizing all articles of subsistence which could be found in that part of the town already occupied, and transported them to Arista's house, on the verge of the city, at the foot of the Loma d'Independencia.

The activity in the American positions was noticed by General Ampudia, and he sent word to Worth that he considered it as a violation of the spirit of the existing truce, and required him to desist from his preparations; but Worth at once refused, and in a short time had every thing in readiness to renew the attack so far as his division was concerned. Ampudia soon after requested an interview with the American general-in-chief, and, when informed that it would be some time before his arrival, desired to see General Worth. An interview took place, but every thing was delayed until the arrival of General Taylor, who came at about eleven o'clock, accompanied by his staff, and many officers of the first and volunteer divisions. At a preliminary interview, he refused to open a

negotiation unless it was with a view to arrange terms of capitulation. The Mexican general requested time for consideration, and he was allowed until one o'clock, at which hour General Taylor declared that, unless the basis demanded was agreed to, he should renew the assault; but before one General Ampudia signified his acceptance of the basis, and a conference took place.

It was announced by the Mexican general that he had received official information that the new Mexican government had consented to receive commissioners for the negotiation of peace, and had already appointed commissioners on the Mexican side; and that, by the change of government, he was released from obedience to his former orders to defend the city. Under these circumstances, and being actuated, as he said, by a desire to prevent the further effusion of blood, he renewed his proposition for an arrangement upon the terms set forth in his note of the previous evening. General Taylor, as before, refused to entertain any such proposition, which he might very well have considered as a demonstration of bad faith, as the negotiation had been opened upon the implied promise of the Mexican general to capitulate; and he was upon the point of breaking off the conference, when the governor of the city proposed the appointment of a mixed commission for the consideration of the matter. To this, after some hesitation, General Taylor consented, and named General Worth, Governor Henderson, and Colonel

Davis on his part, and Ampudia designated Generals Ortega, Requena, and the Governor Llano.

Having been verbally instructed, the American commissioners demanded the surrender of Monterey, all the arms and munitions of war, and all other public property. They proposed to allow the Mexican army to retire without parole, the officers retaining their side arms, beyond a line extending through the pass of the Rinconada, the city of Linares, and San Fernando on the coast; and that General Taylor should agree not to advance beyond the line for eight weeks, or until the respective governments could be heard from.

The Mexican commissioners refused the proposition, and insisted upon the retention of arms and artillery. They declared that they considered this as necessary for their national honor; but, as the American officers had gone to the limit of their instructions, the commission rose and reported the disagreement.

Upon this, General Ampudia (in the mean while insisting upon retaining the small arms, as a point in which the honor of his nation was involved) reiterated his great desire of putting an end to the bloodshed, and offered to concede his artillery. After some hesitation, General Taylor yielded the point with reference to the small arms, and, with modified instructions, the commission reassembled.

The Mexican commissioners, however, insisted that it was a disgrace to their artillery arm to surrender all the guns, inasmuch as the corps of their

army retained their full equipment, and would not consent to the terms which their general had offered. The commission therefore rose again and reported.

General Taylor, upon receiving the report, announced that the conference was at an end, and rose to leave the room. He was stopped by one of the Mexican commissioners, who entered into a conversation with him, and, at the same time, by Taylor's permission, Worth entered into conversation with Ampudia.

The result was the reassembling of the commission, and the final agreement upon terms of capitulation, by which the Mexican army was to be allowed to retain one field battery. With the modifications, the terms were, in general, that the Mexican army should evacuate the town, taking with it all the small arms, six field pieces with twenty-one rounds of ammunition, and all the cavalry horses. All other material of war and public property were to be surrendered to the United States forces, and the armistice, first proposed on the part of General Taylor, was agreed to.*

The Mexican commissioners were, however, tardy in executing the articles, and insisted strongly upon such a wording of the instrument as should induce the belief that their act was voluntary, and one of policy, and not the legitimate result of the operations before the town. Their wishes were

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 349, 350.

negatived by the American commissioners, who declined to alter the wording of their demands further than had already been done; but they allowed three articles to be added, which prescribed the method of turning over and receiving the public property to be surrendered, stipulated that all doubts should be construed on principles of liberality to the retiring army, and that the Mexican flag, when struck, should be saluted by its own battery. Still the Mexican commissioners and general struggled for delay, and started many points which had been either previously disposed of or were entirely out of consideration. To allow room for enlarging upon his good conduct in the operations, Ampudia desired that the Spanish copy should differ materially from the English; but this was refused, and the English copy having been left to be literally translated, the commission broke up for the night.

The troops of both armies, meanwhile, remained quiet in their respective positions. On the following morning the commission met again, and the Mexican officers still endeavored to gain some new concession; but a peremptory demand was made that the articles of both the English and Spanish copies should be signed by the Mexican commissioners and general, which was at length complied with, and the agreement was complete.*

* The facts in relation to the negotiation of the convention are principally derived from the letter of Colonel Davis and its accompanying memoranda, of dates of January 6th, 1847, and October 7th, 1846, put forth originally in defense of the measure, and published in the Washington Union.

During the morning of the 25th the Mexican garrison evacuated the citadel, and on successive days the divisions of the army marched to Saltillo, taking with them, however, six twelve pounder guns, which, in accordance with article eighth of the convention, were liberally construed into a light field battery. On the 28th the last Mexican corps left the town, and Worth's division occupied the principal points throughout its extent. The remainder of the American army kept its camp in the wood of San Domingo.

In the different operations which resulted in the fall of Monterey, the American army had lost twelve officers and one hundred and eight men killed, and thirty-one officers and three hundred and thirty-seven men wounded. Of this loss, by far the greater portion had been incurred upon the 21st, in the attack upon the eastern fronts of the city; for not more than fifty-five of the whole number were included in Worth's division, and the loss in the street fight on the 23d had been but small.

The number of Mexicans who fell can hardly be estimated with any thing like accuracy. The operations were so varied, and the points of attack so numerous, that it is probable it was never accurately known; and, moreover, the irregulars deserted, when ill fortune befell the Mexican arms, in great numbers; but it can be safely set down at over one thousand men.

When General Ampudia had arrived at Saltillo, he issued a proclamation to the people of the three

departments under his command, which was remarkable, not only for its peculiar style, but for certain declarations, which proved with how much good faith he had acted when he had negotiated the convention of Monterey.

He announced his defeat, and made most humble apologies for his incapacity, a knowledge of which, he stated, had induced him to request General Almonte to relieve him in the command. After a short but false account of the operations, in which the valor of his troops was highly extolled, and his defeat attributed to unfortunate accidents, he boasted of having compelled the enemy to grant terms which saved the honor of the army and the nation, as well as his troops, with their arms and equipments. He concluded by assuring his countrymen of the little importance of the loss of Monterey, inciting them to a continued hostility to the invaders, and with a piece of flattery to Santa Anna, "the favorite general of the Mexicans," who, it was announced, was on his way to take direction of affairs in person.

Having thrown this forth to make his peace with the new dictator and the people, he very soon received orders to march his command to San Luis, and on the 18th of October he evacuated Saltillo, leaving the country in that vicinity protected only by the stipulations of the convention. Ampudia was successful in conciliating Santa Anna, and that being the case, the opinion of the Mexican people was of small consequence. But the inflam-

matory nature of his proclamation, and the declarations of the hostile intentions of Santa Anna, did not increase any friendly feeling which might have been entertained for him personally by General Taylor or other Americans, when compared with his statements made in conference at Monterey.

The desire of the President of the United States for the movement on Monterey was made known to General Taylor in the dispatches of Secretary Marcy of the 1st of June and the 9th of July, both written before the receipt at Washington of any letters from General Taylor, which gave his views *in extenso* of the proper object of military operations. In the first of these dispatches, however, was propounded the question whether the operations from the base of the Rio Grande should look to the city of Mexico, or be confined to the undertaking of cutting off the northern provinces. And in the second, the views of General Taylor were requested concerning an expedition from another base, which was to look to the capital as the necessary end of military movements, should Mexico persist in her obstinacy. In both, much was necessarily left to the general commanding in the field; and the object of the movement upon Monterey, in the opinion of the government, so far as can be judged of from the written dispatches, was, first, to seize an important point in the enemy's country with a view to cutting off the northern provinces, or of gaining some distance upon the high road to

Mexico. But as doubts arose as to the practicability of the advance from that direction, and it was contemplated on the 9th of July to move on the capital from the base of Vera Cruz, its object must then have been considered simply to inflict a blow upon the enemy, and to employ the force then upon the Rio Grande in offensive operations during the sickly season upon the Gulf coast; for in all the letters of Mr. Marcy, the wish of the President was manifested that the war should be vigorously prosecuted, which was a necessary policy for effect both at home and abroad. The wishes of the government, thus manifested, necessarily had much weight with General Taylor; but, before any communication on the subject had reached him from Washington, he contemplated the same movement. In the discretion which was allowed him, as well as in the nature of the case, the origin and responsibility of, as well as the greater share of any merit which may attach to the general direction of the operations about Monterey, belongs to him, and the object which he had in view is the next subject for remark.

May 21st, he wrote to the adjutant general that, with certain additional means, "operations might be carried on in the valley of the San Juan toward Monterey, the first city of importance in that direction."* On the 3d of June he wrote again to the adjutant general, and spoke of estab-

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 300.

lishing depôts in advance on the route to Monterey, which, he said, "I shall lose no time in doing, as soon as proper transports arrive, unless I receive counter instructions from the department."* But in none of his early letters is the movement upon Monterey treated of as being a step in view of any other end than its capture and occupation, and, as it necessarily was, a blow upon the enemy, who might have been expected to be more willing to accede to terms of peace after having lost an important town in the north of Mexico. The desire of General Taylor, at the time of writing, like that of the authorities at Washington, appears to have been for immediate action of some sort, and Monterey, "the first city of importance in that direction," was the object of his attention, so far as can be ascertained from his communications to the adjutant general.

In his answers to the dispatches of Mr. Marcy of the 8th of June and the 9th of July, the expedition was treated of as one of experiment upon the agricultural capacity of the valley of the San Juan, and future movements of the army in that direction were made to depend very much upon the result of that experiment. The force with which he intended to move was distinctly stated to be of about six thousand men; and the manifest purpose of the expedition, so far as it related to future operations, then was, to ascertain their practicabili-

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 305.

ty. On the part of the general, then, the movement was one of experiment.

War is of itself an experiment, but "*the art of war is not conjectural.*" However much may be left to chance and to circumstances by authorities at the distance of some thousand miles from the scene of hostilities, yet it is never proper that the same course of action should be adopted on the part of the general in the field. But, since General Taylor moved from Camargo with about the numerical force which he had contemplated when he wrote his answers to the letters of the 8th of June and the 9th of July, and without any distinct knowledge of the force or position of the enemy, as is apparent from the information contained in his letter to Mr. Marcy from Marin, it can not but be deemed that, on his part, the whole operation was an experiment, undertaken, it is true, with a force determined upon important military considerations, but without any reference to the strength of the enemy.

In a subsequent letter to General Gaines, which that officer took the pains to have set forth in the newspapers, General Taylor stated that, in moving upon Monterey with inadequate means and a small force, he was actuated by a desire of saving the credit of the administration, which could not but be benefited by his success, while he took the whole responsibility of failure. How far the credit of the administration would have been benefited by the result of an illy organized and illy provided

expedition, may well be considered questionable, and certainly the general could hardly have hoped to gain permanent reputation from it. But in giving this as a reason for the advance, when his own declarations and the circumstances under which it took place are considered, it may well be believed that General Taylor does scant justice to the pertinacity of purpose, both in general and in detail, which is one of his distinguishing characteristics. He had early expressed his determination to advance with a force of about six thousand men; he knew comparatively nothing of the strength and position of the enemy, and progressed even to within fifteen hundred yards of Monterey before he had made up his mind as to the certainty of a struggle for its occupation. If there were to be no opposition, certainly a column of about six thousand men was one of quite sufficient strength to undertake the expedition, and, inasmuch as it was successful, it may perhaps be considered that it was in reality sufficient. Various comments have been made upon the operations at Monterey, and especially the convention which was entered into, all of which have been met by the statement of difficulties arising in the want of force, of artillery, and subsistence of the American army before the town; and, on the part of those defending the measures, it has been admitted that the strength of the command was inadequate to the task which it in a manner accomplished. It has been attempted to lay whatever blame may attach to this inadequacy

at the door of the authorities of Washington, and the secretary of war and the quarter-master general have been called upon to support a full share. But if the force which moved upon Monterey was inadequate to its capture, the responsibility must rest with General Taylor, for it is a settled maxim in war, "*that a general has no right to shelter his mistakes under cover of his government, the authorities of which are distant from the scene of operations, and must consequently be ill informed or wholly ignorant of the actual state of things.*"*

The principal difficulty which has been stated in excuse for the inadequacy of the force was the want of transportation, and the blame of this want has been thrown upon the quarter-master general. In reply to the accusation, he has stated that General Taylor made but few, if any, requisitions upon him; that he was in ignorance of these wants; and that whatever was furnished, was furnished mainly upon his own responsibility. But, whatever may be said in extenuation of the error in moving upon Monterey with a force of about six thousand men, the facts—that it was the number originally contemplated by General Taylor; that it was determined by the uncertainty of supporting a larger force in the valley of the San Juan; that, in addition to the want of transportation, that uncertainty was always previous to the operations assigned by General Taylor as a reason, and that it was doubtful in his mind whether there would be any opposition

* Napoleon.

at the place—show that the responsibility of the movement rests upon himself; certainly that of the general operations about the city is his entirely.

As the whole expedition had been experimental from the commencement, so, also, were each of the separate operations against the town on the part of General Taylor, and the first of these, in point of time as well as of importance, was of exceeding delicacy. I speak of Worth's movement to gain the Saltillo road, and to attack in rear of Monterey; for "*nothing is so rash or contrary to principle as to make a flank march before an enemy in position, especially when this army occupies heights at the foot of which you are forced to defile.*"* This was precisely the movement of Worth's division to gain the rear of Monterey, and its delicacy and danger were obvious to all. That General Taylor appreciated them is apparent from the care which he took to display his divisions on the east during the afternoon of the 20th, and to inform Worth of the movements of the enemy in town, and from the demonstration which he made on the morning of the 21st to favor it. With this appreciation of the danger of the operation, the only reasons which can be seen why it was ordered as it was are in the character of the enemy. It is true that the road was reconnoitered and the route discovered to be practicable; but the very reconnaissance might have showed the danger of the movement, and the fact that Worth, upon gaining the Saltillo road,

* Napoleon.

would be isolated, if the enemy chose to make him so, at a distance of more than five miles from the main army. He occupied a defile in rear of the town, but in the march he had left a defile in his rear also, and the safety of his position could only have depended upon the inactivity of the enemy, his own genius, and the bravery of his troops. Having marched from the wood of San Domingo on the general object of his movement, Worth, however, exercised an independent command, and the subsequent operations upon the west were his.

That the attacks upon the east of Monterey on the morning of the 21st were experimental entirely, and intended to have been demonstrations in favor of Worth, is apparent from General Taylor's official report, and from the nature of the operations. To change a demonstration into a positive attack upon the discovery of an important advantage is certainly an evidence of genius, but it can hardly be said that the entanglement of a corps in a position of which nothing is known, and for the purpose of attacking an uncertain object, is demonstrative of aught else than heedless bravery. Upon whomsoever the responsibility of the engagement of Garland's column about Fort Teneria may rest, the movement from the first was one which exposed it to imminent hazard, inasmuch as it was placed under the flank fire of the citadel, about which the enemy was in force, and who, with ordinary good conduct, might have been expected to interrupt the communications. The attack in

town was in keeping with the commencement of the movement; for, by passing Fort Teneria, the left flank too was exposed; and finally, having run on to the masked breast-works, in spite of the obstinate bravery of officers and men, it resulted, as such attacks generally do, in a repulse. There can be no doubt that the American general anticipated nothing of this kind. Although he brought up his remaining troops to restore the battle with promptitude, he not only placed them in the same predicament with Garland's column, and exposed them to the flank fire of the citadel, but gave an opportunity to the Mexican cavalry to cut up his camp guard, which, had they been of good material, certainly would have been accomplished. The nature of the whole movement on the morning of the 21st, on the east of Monterey, is fully apparent, from the fact that, after having brought up his whole disposable force, the resources immediately at the disposal of General Taylor failed him, and he had ordered a retreat, when a fortuitous circumstance gave him an advantage, and something to show as the result of the attack. But, had not Backus fortunately occupied the tannery in the confusion of the assault, and had not his fire coincided in point of time with the advance of Quitman's brigade, it is more than probable that the result of the operations on the east of Monterey would have been told in few words—that the American troops had been beaten back at all points.

The future operations of the same day were very

much of the same nature as the first. They have the recommendation of having been made after the partial success; and, although unsuccessful in themselves, and hazardous, they undoubtedly had great effect upon the enemy, in keeping his attention fixed upon the east of the town. The beneficial effect of the operations of the 21st ceased there. The demonstration had been made, though at great cost, and a point of Mexican defense had been gained. But its occupation entailed the necessity of communicating with the camp under the flank fire of the citadel, a distance of some three miles, which was certainly hazardous during the continuance of the operations.

The movements on the west of Monterey, though not less hazardous than those on the east, were characterized by a caution in perfect keeping with their importance and their delicacy. Moreover, having been commenced, they had an end in view which was worth some hazard—the possession of the keys to the whole position of the enemy. The advance on the morning of the 21st was careful, and the defile past the hills of Independencia and of Federacion was cleared of the enemy before the train was brought forward. A secure position was obtained before any detachment was made for the assault of any position; and those assaults, when made, were quickly followed up and supported. It might have been practicable to carry the Loma de Federacion immediately after the retreat of the enemy from the junction of the roads, and its im-

mediate assault was advised. But in the uncertainty which existed with regard to Mexican reinforcements from Saltillo, Worth refused to adopt the suggestion, and, though he lost time, he gained security. The same combination of prudence and vigor was apparent throughout the operations of the 22d; and the chief evidence of the merit of the whole course of action on the west is the fact that the loss of the division was but trifling in comparison, while the positions gained insured the fall of Monterey. If not, why were the forts on the east abandoned by the enemy on the night of the 22d? The American troops held no other point in that vicinity than which they had occupied on the previous night, and had made no other demonstration of hostility than by a cannonade, which was inferior to that of the enemy from Fort Diablo.

The evacuation of the forts gave an opportunity for the attack through the streets on the 23d, but on the part of General Taylor it was experimental, as he states in his report; and, after having been pushed to close vicinity of the Plaza, its results were given up, and, except in the moral effect upon the enemy, the attack was useless. Worth's advance was of an entirely different nature. He guarded his communications, retained all the ground which he gained, and continued his preparations for battle with the ultimate end of the attack in view throughout. Indeed, it is hard to see in what, during the whole series of his movements upon the west, he neglected any thing which might

conduce to the safety of his command in its delicate position, or the success of his enterprise ; and, notwithstanding the rashness of the original movement, his success justified General Taylor in ordering it, in his selection of the commander for the hazardous enterprise, in his confidence in his own troops, and in his appreciation of the Mexicans and their commanders ; and upon these must rest, more than all else, the credit due General Taylor in the operations about Monterey.

For in them the whole theory of war was disregarded, the attack was made without knowledge, and almost without consideration of the enemy's position ; and, although boldly made and bravely persisted in, yet was attended with reverses and loss at the very points where they had been least anticipated. It was ultimately successful ; and the capture of Monterey, effected, as it was, by General Taylor's army of scarcely 6500 effectives, increased the reputation of American troops for war-like prowess. And, whatever may be said of the conduct of the operations on the part of the commander, certainly the mass of the army failed not in its duty under any circumstances. And, in general, to this good conduct on the part of subordinate officers and soldiers, and the errors of the Mexican commanders (which have either been noticed or are too obvious to require remark), the success of the undertaking is attributable.

The final subject for remark in these operations is the convention by which they were concluded ;

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and, although its nature renders it necessary that reference should be made to communications of later date, yet it is, perhaps, proper to speak of it in the present connection.

Of all the military acts of General Taylor, none were openly disapproved of by the authorities at Washington, and none have been severely criticised by the public press, with the exception of this convention. The refusal of the new Mexican government, under General Salas, to accept the offer of negotiations, was received in Washington in September, and on the 22d Mr. Marcy wrote to General Taylor,* informing him of the fact, and of the wish of the President that the war should be so prosecuted that the American army should be in the most threatening position possible, in order to operate upon the Mexican Congress, which was to meet on the 6th of December, and to which the proposition for negotiation was to be submitted. While these wishes were entertained at Washington, the next news from the army brought intelligence of the convention of Monterey and the acknowledged suspension of hostilities for eight weeks, a period which extended to very near the time fixed upon for the meeting of the Congress. It was, therefore, a disappointment; and that it should have been regretted, and in a measure disapproved of, was a consequence. Mr. Marcy's letter, which informed General Taylor of the views of the Pres-

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 341.

ident, bore date on the 13th of October, and treated of the subject in the following paragraphs :*

“In relation to the terms of the capitulation of Monterey, the President instructs me to say that he regrets that it was not deemed advisable to insist upon the terms first proposed. The circumstances which dictated it doubtless justified the change. The President, uninformed of these circumstances, does not know in what degree the recent change in the government of Mexico may have contributed to the result. Certain it is, however, that the present rulers of that country have not as yet given any evidence that they ‘are favorable to the interests of peace.’ Of this you will have been informed by my dispatch of the 22d ultimo.”

“The government did not contemplate, as you will perceive by the tenor of the dispatches from this department, that there probably would happen any contingency in the prosecution of the war in which it would be expedient to suspend hostilities before the offer of acceptable terms of peace.”

After stating the objections to the continuance of the armistice, inasmuch as it interfered with the plans of the government for a vigorous prosecution of the war, with the view which was entertained of influencing the action of the Mexican Congress, he continued :

“The government is fully persuaded that if you had been aware of the special reasons disclosed in

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 355.

the dispatch of the 22d ultimo, and the intentions of the government still entertained, you would not have acceded to the suspension of hostilities for even the limited period specified in the articles of capitulation ; but as its continuance depends upon the orders of your government, you are instructed to give the requisite notice that the armistice is to cease at once, and that each party is at liberty to resume and prosecute hostilities without restriction."

General Taylor replied on the 8th of November, and defended the measure in the following paragraphs :

"The force with which I advanced on Monterey was limited by causes beyond my control to about 6000 men. With this force, as every military man must admit who has seen the ground, it was entirely impossible to invest Monterey so closely as to prevent the escape of the garrison. Although the main communication with the interior was in our possession, yet one route was open to the Mexicans throughout the operations, and could not be closed, as were also other minor tracks through the mountains. Had we, therefore, insisted on more rigorous terms than those granted, the result would have been the escape of the body of the Mexican force, with the destruction of its artillery and magazines, our only advantage being the capture of a few prisoners of war at the expense of valuable lives and much damage to the city. The consideration of humanity was present to my mind dur-

ing the conference which led to the convention, and outweighed, in my judgment, the doubtful advantages to be gained by a resumption of the attack upon the town. This conclusion has been fully confirmed by an inspection of the enemy's position and means since the surrender. It was discovered that his principal magazine, containing an immense amount of powder, was in the Cathedral, completely exposed to our shells from two directions. The explosion of this mass of powder, which must have ultimately resulted from the continuance of the bombardment, would have been infinitely disastrous, involving the destruction not only of the Mexican troops, but of non-combatants, and even our own people, had we pressed the attack."

"In regard to the temporary suspension of hostilities, the fact that we are not at this moment (within eleven days of the termination of the period fixed by the convention) prepared to move forward in force is a sufficient explanation of the military reasons which dictated this suspension of arms. It paralyzed the enemy during a period when, for the want of necessary means, we could not possibly move." * * *

* * * "I have touched the prominent military points involved in the convention of Monterey. There were other considerations which weighed with the commissioners in framing, and with myself in approving, the articles of the convention. In the conference with General Ampudia, I was distinctly told by him that he had invited it to

spare the further effusion of blood, and because General Santa Anna had declared himself favorable to peace. I knew that our government had made propositions to that of Mexico to negotiate, and I deemed that the change of government in that country since my last instructions fully warranted me in entertaining considerations of policy. My grand motive in moving forward with very limited supplies had been to increase the inducements of the Mexican government to negotiate for peace. Whatever may be the actual views or disposition of the Mexican rulers, or of General Santa Anna, it is not unknown to the government that I had the very best reasons for believing the statement of General Ampudia to be true. It was my opinion at the time of the convention, and it has not been changed, that the liberal treatment of the Mexican army and the suspension of arms would exert none but a favorable influence in our behalf.”*

In the quoted extracts are contained the only official expressions of disapprobation of the terms of the convention on the part of the President and cabinet, and the only arguments in its defense officially put forth by General Taylor.

The reasons of the regret of the authorities at Washington that the convention had been agreed to are obvious, and have been before mentioned. Whatever may have been the diplomatic policy of the country, the invariable wish of the President

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 359.

had been expressed, that the war should be vigorously prosecuted; and when this action had just been particularly enjoined as a measure of policy, to find that it was interrupted by the convention of Monterey, not only in fact, but with that fact published to Mexico, it certainly was cause of regret; and regret was all which was expressed; and that, too, connected with an avowal of confidence that, had the general been more fully informed of the nature of things at the time, he would not have agreed to the convention. It may well be questioned whether this expression of regret called for any defense of the measure. In that undertaken by General Taylor, considerations are stated as having influenced his opinion in favor of it which might well be deemed, by many, to have been considerations on the other side, and in neither criticism nor defense has the state of affairs which existed at the time when the convention was agreed to been fully set forth.

It is true that the force with which General Taylor marched on Monterey was limited to about six thousand five hundred men, and it is no less true that any military man who has seen the ground will promptly admit that it is impossible, with that force, so completely to invest the whole town as to preclude the escape of the garrison. But, on the 23d of September, the Mexican force, having been driven from the positions on the west and one upon the east, and having abandoned the remainder, was concentrated in the Grand Plaza and at the citadel,

the greater force being at the former position. On that day Quitman's troops and others advanced to within one block of the Plaza, and were withdrawn at the very time Worth's advanced from the west to within one block likewise. Had Quitman's troops remained, the Mexican force in the Plaza would have been nearly surrounded. That a junction might have been effected between the two commands in that case is most probable, for a dragoon, who had been sent with a note to Bragg, while he was returning, lost his route, and came through the town to the position of Worth's troops. Had they effected the junction, the main force of the enemy would have been surrounded on three sides; Worth had two guns in position to command the fords of the river, and if two more had been put in position in the lunette at the southern angle of the town, which was perfectly practicable, it is difficult to see how the Mexican army could have effected its escape intact during the day. Quitman's troops were not, however, in position, nor could they be placed in position, when the negotiation was opened, without sending a staff officer a circuit of seven miles, and then marching them three miles from the camp to the city. And why? Because their operations of the 23d were an experiment, and on account of the want of concert of action; a want which might well have been provided against, for, when information reached General Taylor of the abandonment of the works on the east of Monterey, he knew that Worth held the

Obispado, and was in position to at least threaten the city.

Had operations been recommenced early on the 24th, even in the positions in which the troops were, the affair would have been quickly decided ; and a consideration which General Taylor and others have urged in favor of the convention would have hastened the result. As the Cathedral, containing the principal magazine of the enemy, was exposed to the American shells, it is difficult to see how a knowledge of this fact, and that himself and his main force would have been involved in common destruction, could have operated with the Mexican general to induce him to hold out for better terms, if he had found all attempts at negotiation fruitless.

By the negotiation, however, time was consumed until it became near night ; and then, indeed, inasmuch as there was no force upon the east, the probability of the escape of the garrison might have been considered.

The immediate consideration of humanity in respect to an enemy is always secondary, whenever the exercise of such humanity may tend to prolong the war, for it never fails, in such case, to result in a manner prejudicial to its own great interests. Its policy, in the present instance, may well be doubted. General Taylor trusted, in some degree, to the statement of Ampudia, that the new government of Mexico had appointed commissioners to treat for peace ; a statement which he might

well have distrusted; for, had Ampudia known such to be the case, why did he choose to risk a battle for nothing? Why did he not seek to delay Taylor's advance by diplomacy and the announcement of the fact? But, even if it were true that commissioners had been appointed, it can hardly be seen why it was believed that the knowledge of the safety of 7000 men, organized and equipped, and their consequent availability in future operations, could have operated to increase the inducements of the Mexican government to make peace.

It has been urged by one of the commissioners that the moral effect of the capitulation was greater than if the enemy had made his escape, having destroyed his magazines and artillery.* It may have been the case, but it certainly was not greater than if the main force had been captured or destroyed, or driven in confusion before the assault of the Americans, and dispersed. Besides, had not the want of concert of action induced the withdrawal of Quitman's troops, and had the original intentions of General Taylor been carried out in respect to the negotiation of the convention, the opportunity for the escape of Ampudia's troops would never have been allowed.

General Taylor's original opinions were not in favor of the terms as entered into. They were the result of long discussions, and these, in military operations, almost invariably "*terminate in the adop-*

* Colonel Davis.

tion of the worst course, which in war is the most timid, or, if you will, the most prudent."* And the discussions in this case had an additional feature in their disfavor, that they were participated in by the enemy.

The consideration which was urged in defense of the armistice of eight weeks, that it tied the hands of the enemy during a period when the American army was unable to move, was hardly a consideration of any moment; for it presupposed that the Mexican army was able to act, and that a Mexican general would be bound by the terms of a military convention, when it might be his interest to break them. If the Mexican army was in a condition to take the field, the policy of proclaiming eight weeks of American inactivity may well be doubted, and all history told the practice of Mexican commanders in regard to terms of a convention. Nothing but a turn of affairs, which would have rendered it a matter of policy on their part to act with bad faith, was necessary to dispel any dependence which might be placed upon them; and, moreover, Ampudia could communicate with San Luis in six days; General Taylor could communicate with Washington in six weeks; wherefore, even if the enemy acted in good faith, if he were in condition to advance, the armistice availed nothing, while the fact was published that, having taken Monterey after a hard struggle, General Taylor was exhausted, and that he would be inactive for eight weeks, dur-

* Napoleon.

ing which time Mexico had a respite from danger, and could prepare at leisure for future operations.

That, in view of all these considerations, the agreement to the convention of Monterey was the cause of regret on the part of the authorities at Washington, is not strange. Strange would it have been if it had not. But, however much they may have felt, their expressions, as put forth by Mr. Marcy, were by no means so strong as those of General Taylor, made before the receipt of Mr. Marcy's letter, when he received Ampudia's proclamations from Saltillo, and learned how completely he had been imposed upon by the Mexican.

The operations at Monterey had nevertheless an effect upon the progress of the war; not in increasing the inducements to the Mexican government to make peace—not in depriving the enemy of resources by fulfilling the design of cutting off the northern provinces, but in carrying the theater of war from the frontiers of the United States, and, as was afterward apparent, in gaining the strong point for its defense against a Mexican incursion.

Another effect, and by no means the least, was that upon the American people. They gave them news of a positive military character. The struggle had been severe, the captured positions were strong, and the bravery of the troops was a subject of national congratulation. The newspaper editors, poets, and critics had full scope for the employment of their genius, which they failed not to take advantage of, and for a long time enlarged upon the

operations at Monterey in such a manner that they could hardly be recognized. And, among other tales of romantic character, there was one which gave rise to many pretty sympathies on the part of the friends of Mexico in the United States.

Although I can not positively deny the statement of a Mexican woman being slain while in the act of administering succor to the wounded on the field of battle, yet I may be permitted to doubt its veracity, inasmuch as it was first heard from the United States, and as the Mexican women generally found about such scenes were much more likely to have murdered and robbed the wounded on either side than to have engaged in any act of kindly ministry. And this is not only the result of observation, but is in keeping with the testimony of a Mexican general officer.*

* General Requena. Campaign Sketches, p. 107.

CHAPTER VI.

New Mexico. Object of Expedition against New Mexico—Instructions to Colonel Kearney—His Movement—Nature of the New Mexican Government—of the People—Preparations for Defense—Flight of Amijo—Kearney takes Possession of Santa Fé—Establishes a civil Government—Marches to California—Observations.

California. Fremont's Expeditions—Controversy with General Castro—March to the North—Return—Affairs at Sonoma and with De la Tone—Declaration of Californian Independence—Instructions of Secretary of Navy to Commodore Sloat—He takes Possession of Monterey and San Francisco—Proclamation—Correspondence with Mexican Authorities—Succeeded by Commodore Stockton—Organization of California Battalion—Expedition to the Ciudad de los Angeles—Flight of Pico and Castro—Establishment of civil Government.

Chihuahua. Object and Organization of Chihuahua Expedition—Progresses to Monclova—Is given up.

Naval Operations in Gulf of Mexico. Blockade—Attempt upon Alvarado—Expedition to Tobasco.

In organizing an expedition against the department of New Mexico, the conquest and occupation of that department was at first looked to as the only object of the movement. Whether it was intended, at the time of the issue of the first orders relative thereto, that the conquest and occupation should be with a view to the permanent acquisition of the department, or whether the movement was to be one of simple attack on a portion of the Mexican republic, does not immediately appear from the published correspondence of the War Department. From the nature of the instructions subsequently issued, it is probable that it was at first intended to be for the latter object alone, which

it might very well have been, in consideration of the represented importance of Santa Fé, the capital of the department, as the place of entry in the north of Mexico for a trade across the prairies from the United States to the amount of one million of dollars annually.

The orders for the organization of a column for the service were issued on the 13th and 14th of May, 1846, and arrangements made at that time for calling forth the volunteers, of which it was to be principally composed, from the State of Missouri. While the organization progressed, the policy of the administration was definitely adopted and modified, and additional instructions were given to Colonel Kearney, of the first United States dragoons, who had been selected for the command of the expedition.

These instructions were written by Mr. Marcy on the 3d of June, and the end of the expedition was stated to be the occupation of Upper California. Colonel Kearney was directed, after having taken possession of New Mexico, to leave a garrison at Santa Fé, and with the remainder of his force to advance into that country. To enable him to take the greater portion, an additional requisition was made on the Governor of Missouri for 1000 mounted volunteers, to follow on his route; and he was authorized to raise such number of Mormons, who were preparing to emigrate to California, as he might deem proper, provided this number did not exceed one third of his entire force; and also, upon

his arrival in the proposed theater of his operations, to accept the services of such American settlers as might offer themselves. In regard to the civil government of the conquered provinces, he was instructed in the following words :

“Should you conquer and take possession of New Mexico and Upper California, or considerable places in either, you will establish temporary civil governments therein, abolishing all arbitrary restrictions that may exist, so far as it may be done with safety. In performing this duty, it would be wise and prudent to continue in their employment all such of the existing officers as are known to be friendly to the United States, and will take the oath of allegiance to them. The duties at the custom-houses ought at once to be reduced to such a rate as may be barely sufficient to maintain the necessary officers, without yielding any revenue to the government. You may assure the people of those provinces that it is the wish and design of the United States to provide for them a free government, with the least possible delay, similar to that which exists in our territories. They will then be called upon to exercise the rights of freemen in electing their own representatives to the territorial Legislature. It is foreseen that what relates to the civil government will be a difficult and unpleasant part of your duty, and much must necessarily be left to your own discretion.”*

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 154.

With these instructions, Colonel Kearney took measures for insuring the organization of the additional force of volunteers and Mormons, and sent the original levy by detachments on the Santa Fé trail from Fort Leavenworth. By the last of July "the army of the West" was concentrated near Bent's Fort, on the Arkansas River. It consisted, in all, of about 1800 men—eight companies of United States dragoons, nine of volunteer cavalry, two of volunteer artillery, and two of infantry.

On the 31st of July, preparatory to his advance into the Mexican territory, Colonel Kearney issued a proclamation, which was conciliatory in its tone, but positively avowing the intentions of the government of the United States. It was said, "The undersigned enters New Mexico with a large military force for the purpose of seeking union with and ameliorating the condition of its inhabitants."* Though the effect which the proclamation might have upon the inhabitants of the country was undoubtedly the cause of its issue, and the furtherance of the policy of the United States was its first object, as, indeed, policy is the first consideration in the issue of all such papers, yet the condition of the people of New Mexico needed amelioration, and it could hardly have been worsted in any manner by its permanent occupation by the forces of the United States.

The government of the department, such as it

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 168.

was, was administered by Armijo, the commandante general who was, in reality, nearly absolute, although his authority was nominally derived from the central government of the republic. He made use of his power for the exclusive benefit of himself and the few *ricos* of the province who supported him. For that benefit the proceeds of the enormous duties of the custom-house were in great part appropriated. The character of Armijo was a compound of cunning, cowardice, and rapacity, and he developed these elements not only in his government, but in his business transactions; for, besides being both a civil and military officer, he was also a merchant. Law of a certain kind existed in New Mexico, but it was of little or no avail if its enforcement prejudiced in any degree the interests of the governor or of his adherents.

The population was a medley of Indians, New Mexicans, some few of Spanish blood, and of Americans. The New Mexicans, a mixed race of Spaniards and Indians, were perhaps the most worthless of all the population of the republic. They were hardly half civilized, and lived with but few restraints of morality or honor. The example which for a long series of years had been set them by their chiefs, they had not failed to follow, and duplicity and villainy were apparent in most of their dealings. Notwithstanding their isolated and dangerous situation, in the vicinity of hostile Indian tribes, they had none of the courageous and warlike characteristics which in general belong to

borderers of all nations. They were abject cowards, and, like all cowards, were cruel and treacherous. To induce them to commit any deed, no matter how nefarious, there was only wanting the prospect of impunity and the hope of a slight reward.*

The Indians of the *Pueblos*, who were quite as numerous as the New Mexicans, were fully as civilized, and far braver, although, as far as honesty and respectability were concerned, they might be included in the same class. The mass of the inhabitants professed the established religion of Mexico, the Roman Catholic. But the best of them were profoundly ignorant and superstitious, and the Indians clung to many of the idolatrous fancies of the ancient Aztecs, which could hardly have had any beneficial effect upon the superstitions of the recognized Church. The priests, who were as villainous as the worst of the population, exercised an extensive influence over the mass of the people, and did not fail to enforce, so far as in them lay, a blind obedience to their dictates.

When Kearney's approach was first announced, many ridiculous stories were circulated among the people of the country, which represented his troops to be barbarians of the nature of their ordinary enemies of the Eutaw and Navajoe Indians, except that they were perhaps more refined in cruelty. Endeavors were made to make preparations to oppose the American advance, and with partial suc-

* Mr. Ruxton's work.

cess. Armijo circulated reports of the speedy coming of re-enforcements, and it was said and believed that General Urrea, with many thousand men, was on his march, and that more were in his rear.

Whether the central government of Mexico had ever promised to send re-enforcements is questionable; for, at the time of the latest communication with the capital, Paredes was in no condition to spare troops from the protection of his own authority and the defense of the frontier against General Taylor for the purpose of guarding a country so distant and unimportant as New Mexico. But, if it were so, none ever arrived. Armijo, however, collected a few soldiers of the Mexican army, a body of militia, New Mexicans and Indians, which made up a force of between three and four thousand men, with six pieces of artillery, and took post in a cañon, some fifteen miles distant from Santa Fé, to dispute the advance of the invaders.

Exact data upon which to rest an account of his proceedings are difficult to obtain, but they are not at all necessary; for upon Kearney's near approach he called a council of war, at which, it is said, his second in command and other officers, all worthy of their chief, advised a retreat. He adopted the advice, broke up his force, collected his property, all the merchandise which he had in the town, and struck with his caravan to the southward, to render an account of his disgrace, and find a market for his wares, leaving the country perfectly open and the advance of the enemy unopposed.

In the mean time General Kearney had advanced into the Mexican settlements, and on the 14th of August reached the town of Vegas. On the morning of the 15th he took the first step in establishing the civil authority of the United States by assembling the people in the plaza of the village, and declaring them absolved from allegiance to the Mexican government, and all obedience to Governor Armijo. He caused the alcalde and two captains of militia to take the oath of allegiance, which they did without demur, although with no good grace. The people submitted in quiet, and, so far as the oaths of allegiance could effect it, the village of Vegas was under the government of the United States.*

On the following morning the same scene was enacted at the village of San Miguel, of which the alcalde and civil officers took the oath of allegiance after stipulating that their religion should be respected.

During the 15th and 16th information of Armijo's position in the cañon was received, but on the 17th it was learned that he had broken up his force and fled. On the 18th the American commander entered and took possession of Santa Fé, being courteously received by the lieutenant governor, Vigil, who had remained after Armijo's flight.†

General Kearney addressed the people in the

* Lieutenant-colonel Emory's Notes of Reconnaissance in New Mexico and California. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 27.

† Idem. Idem, p. 31.

plaza of the town on the following day, and repeated the conciliatory expressions which he had before used at Vegas and San Miguel, and which had been put forth in his proclamation of the 3d of August. The mass of the population professed to be satisfied with the change of government, and the chiefs and head men of the Pueblo Indians came in soon after to give in their adhesion and express their satisfaction at the arrival of the Americans.*

On the 22d, the American commander issued a second proclamation, in which he declared his intention of occupying and holding the department, with its original boundaries, on both sides of the Rio Grande; set forth the military force which enabled him to do it, and his intention to protect the inhabitants against the incursions of hostile Indians; called upon all who had taken up arms to return to their homes, under penalty of being considered enemies and traitors; announced the intention of the United States to provide a free government for New Mexico with the least possible delay, and concluded by absolving all persons residing within its boundaries from allegiance to the central Mexican government, and claiming them as citizens of the United States.†

Changes in the government of the newly-occupied territory were soon introduced. The high and

* Lieutenant-colonel Emory's Notes of Reconnaissance in New Mexico and California. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 33.

† Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 170.

exorbitant taxes were abolished or very much reduced, many infirm and corrupt officers were removed, and others, principally of the inhabitants, were appointed in their stead.*

Immediately after his arrival, Kearney had ordered a site to be selected for the erection of a fort, for the protection and secure occupation of Santa Fé. On the 23d ground was broken on a work computed for a garrison of 280 men, at a point upon a commanding eminence within six hundred yards of the heart of the town. While the work was in progress, intelligence was received that re-enforcements had met Armijo on his flight to the southward; that he had turned back, and, having aroused the entire population of the southern portion of the department, was marching at the head of a large force in the direction of Santa Fé.†

Before the rumors became well authenticated, it had been intended to send an expedition to quiet any disturbance in that quarter, and upon the receipt of this intelligence, the strength of it was increased to 700 men.‡ On the 3d of September it marched, under Kearney's own command. The greater southern portion of the province was visited; the rumors proved to be false; and, having proceeded as far as Tome, some one hundred and fifty miles south of Santa Fé, the command returned. So quiet and so well satisfied with the change had

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 172-175.

† Emory. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 32.

‡ Idem. Idem, p. 33, 36.

the inhabitants appeared, that upon his return on the 16th of September, Kearney announced to the government that there could no longer be apprehended any organized resistance to the troops in that territory, and that the commander of them, whoever he might be, would have nothing to do but to secure the inhabitants from the depredations of the Navajoe and Eutaw Indians.*

Believing thus, he determined to leave soon for California, taking with him a portion of the troops, leaving orders for the Mormon battalion to follow, and for any surplus force which might be present after the arrival of re-enforcements to proceed south to Chihuahua, to join "the army of the Center," which, under General Wool, was expected to be at that point.†

Previous to his departure, however, he established a civil government for the territory, resembling that of the territories of the United States. The organic law was the same which had been that of the Territory of Missouri. The laws for the government of the territory were compiled from those of Mexico, of Texas, of Texas and Coahuila, and from the statutes of the State of Missouri. Having proclaimed these laws, and appointed the civil governor, Bent, and executive officers, he marched on the 25th of September en route for California, fully believing that the authority of the United States was firmly established on a secure basis.‡

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 174.

† Idem.

‡ Idem, p. 176-229.

His command consisted, at the outset, of but 300 dragoons, as the Mormon battalion had not arrived at the time of his departure from Santa Fé; but on the 6th of October, having left the Rio Grande and struck west for the Gila, he fell in with a messenger, from whom he learned the events which had meanwhile taken place in California, and that the country had been subdued. He therefore sent back two companies of dragoons under Major Sumner, and continued on with the remainder of his force.

The occupation of New Mexico having been effected without opposition, the military operations lack the luster which well-contested battles give to any achievement. They bear but little resemblance to the regular movements of masses in war; for the column was small, and the preparations and marches were regulated by the nature of the route and of the territory against which it was directed. The expedition had little to do with the great question of the war, as was fully proved in the result. It was at first, and so far, against New Mexico alone, and neither at the time nor subsequently was any physical opposition offered on the part of the central government; but the speedy organization of the force and the celerity of the march from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fé are remarkable. In but little more than three months, the orders had been issued from Washington, the force, in great

part, raised and organized, a march of near one thousand miles had been accomplished, and the designated territory occupied; and, within one month subsequently, a civil government, on new principles, had been established upon an apparently sure foundation.

The conduct of General Kearney and the instructions of the War Department, which, in a measure, authorized his action in civil policy, have been severely commented upon, and it has been asserted that such action was in violation of the principles of the Constitution of the United States. It is hardly to be believed that the framers of that instrument could have foreseen such a contingency, or that they should have deemed themselves called upon to provide for it, even if they had; for the right of any power to establish a civil government in a conquered country can not be doubted. Indeed, as the course of action of the United States had been determined upon by the executive, and the permanent acquisition of New Mexico was designed, it was a duty which, according to learned writers, devolved upon the agents of their government. Many inconveniences arise in the consummation of conquests by republics, which are in some degree modified, it is true, in the case of the United States; but, in view of them, high authority has said, that "*when a republic keeps a nation in subjection, it should endeavor to repair the inconveniences arising from the nature of its situation by giving it good laws both for the political*

and civil government of the people."* This was the end of the intention of the President of the United States, set forth in the instructions of the Secretary of War to General Kearney in reference to the government to be established in New Mexico, and it was the end of General Kearney's action. There is but one thing in which it can be seen that he overstepped the limit of his instructions or of the strictest legality. In establishing the government, he claimed the inhabitants as citizens of the United States, and gave to them rights, as such, which could be legally given only after the acknowledged acquisition of territory, under sanction of the treaty-making power, or of the Congress of the United States. In this particular he exceeded his instructions; but much had been left to his discretion, and it might well have been a measure of policy so to do, as he knew the ultimate designs of the President. Certainly, if those designs were to be carried out, it could not have been expected to exercise a beneficial effect upon the state of the country or upon American interest to announce to the inhabitants that the occupation was merely contingent, and that every thing was in an unsettled state. The people, having in view the evacuation of the territory and the return of Mexican dominion, could have been expected to do nothing more in favor of the American cause, certainly, than to hold aloof, if, indeed, they did not take a position of positive hostility. It can not be wondered at

* Spirit of Laws. Montesquieu, book x., chap. viii.

that, when the mass of the people and their leaders expressed themselves satisfied with the change, and hoped that the occupation of the American army would be permanent, General Kearney endeavored to conciliate their good will by declaring them to be citizens of the United States, unmindful of the argument which might be brought against his proceedings, in the violation of the strict letter of legality, at home.

But the attempt to establish a free civil government in New Mexico had in it several elements of failure, and the first and most important was in the nature of the population. With a half-civilized, vicious, and superstitious people, a free government can hardly ever be successfully administered. The superstition must first be eradicated; for of all the difficulties in the advancement of mankind, experience has shown it to be the most serious. To attempt to eradicate it by force is almost useless—certainly useless with a view to the establishment of free institutions; for the people will cling to it with all the pertinacity of martyrs, and though it may be gone in outward seeming, yet it remains in the heart, and only wants an opportunity to show its effect in hostility to the new government, however beneficial it may be, for the sake of the tyranny by which it has been established. The means by which the object can be safely accomplished are to be found in civilization and in the extension of knowledge, and these require time for development and results.

The change from the tyrannical and feeble government of Armijo to that introduced by General Kearney was too sudden for the people, and the extension of the elective franchise to the various leperos and Indians who composed the mass of the population might well have been considered dangerous, inasmuch as, in their vicious ignorance, and led as they were by their priests, they could know neither the value nor the use of liberty in its extended sense.

Another element of difficulty is to be found in the nature of the troops left to occupy the territory. They were nearly all volunteers, and without much discipline. Some had accompanied General Kearney in his march across the prairies, and what they had had been there acquired. But the body of the troops were the new levies who marched in his rear. Had circumstances been such as to have caused General Kearney to remain at Santa Fé, to have watched the development of the government which he had established, and to have controlled both the inhabitants and the American troops in his military capacity, the subsequent disorders might have been prevented; but the troops were left under officers of their own choice, with no superior of independent rank and experience over them, and what discipline they had, as is usually the case with volunteers in garrison, soon became comparatively nothing. Santa Fé abounded with gambling houses, grog-shops, and the like,* and

* Mr. Ruxton's work.

the licentious conduct of the volunteer soldiery could hardly have set an example of good behavior to the half-civilized inhabitants of the country; and, although in perfect keeping with their own ordinary practices, may well have given deep cause of offense, and generated a hatred toward the Americans.

In the mean time, by the force of circumstances, and through the action of persons unprepared for the attempt, and that of the American naval squadron in the Pacific, the conquest and occupation of California had been effected with a rapidity which could in no way have been anticipated.

John C. Fremont, second lieutenant of Topographical Engineers, had made two exploring expeditions to the west of the Rocky Mountains, and for his services on those occasions had been brevetted a captain. In the autumn of 1845 he started again, for the purpose of continuing his explorations, and of discovering, if possible, a new route to Oregon, to the south of the one usually traversed by emigrants. His operations were not of a warlike nature, although his party was necessarily armed for protection against the Indians who infested those regions, and for hunting purposes. In the latter part of January, 1846, he arrived within one hundred miles of Monterey, in California. As his animals needed recruiting, he determined to halt in the valley of the San Joaquin, which he

had previously explored, and which afforded game and grass, the great requisites for the encampment of western travelers. To avoid collision and the compromise of his government, knowing the relations which existed with Mexico when he had left the United States, which might cause his movements to be looked upon with suspicion, he left his party and proceeded in person to Monterey. There he applied to the commandante, General De Castro, for permission to remain in the valley of the San Joaquin during the winter. After explanation of his objects, and some demur on the part of De Castro, it was granted, and Fremont rejoined his party with the intention of moving it to the desired position. De Castro, however, took immediate steps to raise the province against him; and hardly had Fremont arrived in the valley with his party, when he received information of his proceedings. Mr. Larkin, the United States consul at Monterey, sent to warn him of his danger, and a number of Americans, who had settled in the country, offered to assist him in his defense. Fearful of compromising them and his government, Fremont declined their aid, and, with rare determination and bravery, he marched his small party of sixty-two backwoodsmen to within thirty miles of Monterey, took a position on the Sierra Nevada, whence he had a fair prospect over much of the surrounding country, hoisted the American flag, and prepared for resistance. But an approach was all that De Castro attempted; and, having remained some time, and

finding no probability of an attack, Fremont started in the month of March for Oregon.*

Of Fremont's proceedings De Castro complained in a letter to the Mexican Secretary of War and Marine, and in the spring of 1846 the Mexican journals of the capital proclaimed the arrival of his small party as an irruption of Northern barbarians into the department of California. The news came to that city in time to increase, with the aid of the exaggerations of the Mexican commandante general and the fervid imaginations of the journalists, the feeling of hostility to the Americans, which was then causing the revolutions in the Mexican government.

The great objection to Fremont's movement was stated to be the fact of his taking up a defensive position and hoisting the American flag. These were used in arguments to prove the designs of the United States upon the territory, and declared to be a cause of war, by which the Mexicans hoped to vindicate the integrity of their soil, but which, in fact, only afforded an opportunity to their adversaries to carry out their views, if, indeed, they had been seriously entertained at that time.

It is difficult to perceive in what Fremont's action can be deemed unjustifiable. The uninhabited state of the country in the north of California, and the permission given by the commandante general, gave and confirmed his right to winter in the valley of the San Joaquin; and the taking up of

* Colonel Benton's letter to the President. Union, Nov. 9th, 1846.

position and the raising of the national standard were the consequences, and not the cause of De Castro's action. The first was a necessary measure of self-defense, justifiable under any circumstances; and the second, if not of defense, of an honorable pride in making that defense under the banner of his country.

Upon Fremont's departure, De Castro occupied his camp, and, picking up his leavings, proclaimed a victory, boasted of his spoils, and of having stifled a dangerous conspiracy; all of which he duly set forth in his dispatches to the Mexican government. Meanwhile Fremont pursued his way unmolested. But his progress to the north was interrupted by natural obstacles and the hostility of the Tlamath Indians, who killed and wounded five of his men.*

On the 9th of May he was overtaken by Lieutenant Gillespie, of the marines, who bore a letter of introduction from the secretary of state, Mr. Buchanan, and private letters from Senator Benton. In none were contained any explicit instructions for his course of action, but from certain enigmatical passages in a letter from Senator Benton, Fremont inferred that the government desired that he should ascertain and counteract any schemes which foreigners might have in relation to the Californias. As Gillespie had crossed the continent from Vera Cruz to Mazatlan, Fremont considered the intimation of moment, and was at no loss to account for the obscurity of the passages in the

* Colonel Benton's letter to the President.

danger which had existed of the letters falling into Mexican hands. In connection with verbal information from Gillespie, the intimation had a powerful influence on his future action, and he at once determined to return to the settled vicinity of the Sacramento.*

Whether it had been intended by Senator Benton that any thing should be so construed as to induce the attempt to subvert Mexican authority in California, or whether the whole object of Lieutenant Gillespie's mission was to cause precautionary measures to be taken against British schemes for the acquisition of the territory, is a question of doubt. But, in either case, that Fremont's action was unpremeditated, up to the time of the receipt of the letters, there can be no question; for, had he previously contemplated the subversion of Mexican authority, he would hardly have given himself the fatigue and danger of his march to the north.

Upon arriving at the Bay of San Francisco, he learned that, after his retreat from the position on the Sierra Nevada, De Castro had taken steps for expelling the American settlers from the territory, and that he was then at Sonoma, on the opposite side of the bay, preparing an expedition. Under all these circumstances, hemmed in himself, in no immediate condition to return to the United States, the settlers compromised and about to become the objects of hostility to a barbarous people, and be-

* Lieutenant-colonel Fremont's Defense. Executive Document, No. 53, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 376.

ing disgusted with the conduct of the Mexican authorities, early in June Fremont determined to act, and put a stop to their proceedings by overthrowing Mexican authority in California.

On the 11th he commenced by seizing a drove of two hundred horses on the way to De Castro's camp, setting free the party which conducted them. On the 15th he surprised Sonoma, the rendezvous of the Mexican forces, captured General Vallejo and other officers, nine pieces of brass cannon, two hundred and fifty stand of muskets, and a quantity of ammunition and military stores. Leaving fourteen men to garrison the point, he proceeded to the settlements on the Rio de los Americanos, some distance in the interior. There he increased his force from the settlers, and, having heard that De Castro meditated an attack upon Sonoma, he started with ninety men on the 23d of June to return. By rapid traveling, he reached Sonoma on the 25th, at two o'clock in the morning. De Castro's advance of eighty dragoons, under a Captain de la Torre, had already crossed the bay, but it was soon attacked by twenty Americans, and fled after a short conflict. Fremont captured all the boats in which the crossing had been effected. Three of De la Torre's men were shot in retaliation for the butchery of two Americans, who had been taken prisoners by the Mexican troops and cut to pieces with their knives. Having suffered these losses, De Castro retreated to the south.

On the 4th of July Fremont called the Ameri-

can settlers together at Sonoma, and advised them, as their only safety, to declare independence of Mexico, and to prosecute the war. His advice met with a ready response, and the revolutionary flag was at once displayed.* But, meanwhile, the events of the war, of the existence of which Fremont had been ignorant, had become known to Commodore Sloat, the commander of the Pacific squadron, and that officer had commenced taking possession of the towns upon the coast.

The instructions under which Sloat commenced action had been given with a view to the contingency of war, and were written as early as the 24th of June, 1845. In a letter of Mr. Bancroft, secretary of the navy, of that date, to Commodore Sloat, is the following: "It is the earnest desire of the President to pursue the policy of peace, and he is anxious that you, and every part of your squadron, should be assiduously careful to avoid any act which could be construed into an act of aggression.

"Should Mexico, however, be resolutely bent on hostilities, you will be mindful to protect the persons and interests of citizens of the United States near your station; and should you ascertain beyond a doubt that the Mexican government has declared war against us, you will employ the force under your command to the best advantage. The Mexican ports on the Pacific are said to be open and defenseless. If you ascertain with certainty that Mexico has declared war against the United

* Colonel Benton's letter to the President.

States, you will at once possess yourself of the port of San Francisco, and blockade or occupy such other ports as your force may permit."*

At Mazatlan, on the 7th of June, 1846, the commodore learned of the commencement of hostilities, and, leaving a sloop of war at that port, he sailed at once for the coast of California. He arrived at Monterey on the 2d of July, and, after having examined the defenses and localities of the town, summoned it on the 7th. The Mexican captain of artillery who commanded it evacuated the place, with the few soldiers which constituted the garrison, having declined to go through the formalities of a surrender, inasmuch as *he had no orders to do so.*† On the same day, 250 seamen and marines landed and took possession, and hoisted the American flag.

In the proclamation which the commodore published, the intention of the United States to take and hold possession of the territory was distinctly declared, and the privileges and benefits which might be expected from the change of governments were prominently set forth.‡ Such an avowal of policy on the part of the naval commander was, to say the least, premature, for the letter of instructions of the 24th of June was all his authority. Time had not elapsed to allow the transmission of dispatches from Washington to his squadron since

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 231.

† Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 643.

‡ *Idem*, p. 644, 645.

the commencement of hostilities, and he must, therefore, have believed such to have been the determination of the government, instead of knowing it from positive instructions. But the course of conduct was calculated to facilitate the occupation of the country, which he was directed to accomplish, and, as he avowed, in the absence of explicit instructions, he chose rather to be blamed for doing too much than too little.*

Captain Montgomery, in obedience to instructions from the commodore, took possession of Yerba Buena, on the Bay of San Francisco, on the 9th. He immediately commenced preparations for securing the bay by planting the cannon which were found in the country, erecting temporary forts, and organizing volunteer guards. In these proceedings some distrust was felt of English action, and it was to a degree anticipated that the British squadron might interfere to prevent the consummation of the measures of occupation; but the British admiral arrived at the newly-captured ports, and sailed without interference or remonstrance†—a disappointment to the Mexican party in the country, which had anticipated the speedy and effective aid of his naval force.

The news of the acts of the naval commander, and of the seizure of Monterey, Yerba Buena, and other small places, was received by the revolution-

* Correspondence of Commodore Sloat and Captain Montgomery. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 648.

† Idem. Idem, p. 641, 677.

ists soon after their declaration of independence. The American flag was at once substituted for the standard of revolt, and Fremont proceeded with his party to Monterey.

When Commodore Sloat commenced his operations, he had sent a summons to both the governor, Pico, and General De Castro, calling upon them to surrender their authority, and inviting them to meet him at Monterey for the purpose of arranging terms. De Castro's reply was to the effect that he would submit the demand to the governor and assembly of the department; but added, that if the matter rested on his responsibility, he should not fail to maintain the Mexican sovereignty to the last.* Nevertheless, upon the approach of Fremont and his party, he retreated to the capital of California, the Ciudad de los Angeles.

During the progress of these events Commodore Stockton had arrived from the United States, and in consequence of ill health, Commodore Sloat relinquished to him the command of the Pacific squadron about the 29th of July. Previous to this Fremont had arrived with his volunteer force at Monterey, and communicated with Sloat in regard to future movements. The commodore did not contemplate any active operations on shore, notwithstanding his summons to Pico and De Castro, but limited himself to holding the sea-ports already oc-

* Correspondence of Commodore Sloat with Pico and Castro. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 646-649.

cupied, and he announced to the commander at San Francisco that the campaign would be considered at an end whenever Captain Fremont and his party should leave for the United States. The subject of the intended course of action was spoken of by Fremont and Lieutenant Gillespie of the marines to Commodore Stockton before he succeeded to the command of the squadron. He declined giving any opinion at the time, but as Fremont had in consideration the propriety of returning to the United States, it was suggested that he should delay his departure for a few days, when Stockton would probably succeed to the command.*

Being in anticipation of resistance on the part of the armed Californians, and fearful lest they should gain strength and confidence by American inactivity, Stockton urged upon Commodore Sloat that if he intended to relinquish the duty on account of ill health, he should do so at once. Though the latter did not immediately comply, he placed under Stockton's command the sloop of war *Cyane*, from which had been drawn the greater part of the force on shore. Upon this Stockton communicated with Fremont and Gillespie, and under his authority the volunteer force which they had raised was organized into a battalion, of which Fremont was appointed the major and Gillespie a captain.†

* Testimony of Commodore Stockton. Trial of Lieutenant-colonel Fremont. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 178.

† Idem. Idem, p. 180.

In the mean time, information had been received at Monterey of the junction of De Castro with the governor, Pico, and that they were at the time in the vicinity of Ciudad de los Angeles, at the head of a force of about 700 men. In consequence, the newly-organized battalion was embarked upon the sloop of war Cyane, and on the 24th sailed for San Diego, where it was to land, procure a remount, and to intercept the communications of the Mexican force with Sonora.

A few days after, Sloat having left for the United States, Stockton sailed down the coast as far as San Pedro, taking possession, as he passed, of the small town of Santa Barbara. Upon his arrival at San Pedro, he landed a party of sailors and marines, and, having mounted a few ship guns on cart wheels, prepared to advance on Ciudad de los Angeles. While at San Pedro, commissioners arrived from De Castro, offering negotiations, which Stockton declined. In return for the refusal, De Castro announced to him, in extravagant language, that he meant to defend the territory.* Communications having been opened with Fremont, that officer was ordered to join the advance en route, and the little column was directed on Los Angeles. The same day information was received that the enemy had abandoned his camp, which had been intrenched, distant three miles from the town ;

* Testimony of Commodore Stockton. Trial of Lieutenant-colonel Fremont. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 181.

that his troops had dispersed over the country, while the governor and commandante general had taken the route to Sonora.

Having been joined by Fremont, on the 13th of August Stockton entered the capital of California, and took possession of the government house, without a show of opposition.

On the 17th he issued a proclamation announcing his conquest of the department and the military possession of the United States, and promising a government similar to that of the American territories as soon as it could be established.*

Soon after, he ordered the establishment of a government, of which he constituted himself the chief. It could hardly be called a free government, for the legislative power was vested in the governor and a legislative council of seven members, to be appointed by himself for the first two years, after which the members were to be elected by the people. But the government was only temporary in its nature, and the decree by which it was established bore upon its face that it was to continue only until changed by authority of the government of the United States.† Such as it was, it was, for a time, quietly submitted to, and, to all appearance, the occupation of the territory was firmly established.

In the mean time, with a view to the prosecution of the adopted policy, though necessarily in

* Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 669.

† Idem. Idem, p. 271, 272.

ignorance of the events which had transpired, the authorities at Washington had dispatched a company of artillery by sea, around Cape Horn, to California. Its transport conveyed full supplies of arms and munitions of war, and implements for engineer service. Soon after, a regiment of volunteers was raised in the city of New York, especially for California service, of which the men were to serve during the war, and to receive their discharge at such point as the regiment might be found at its termination, provided it was within the limits of the territory of the United States. But neither of these corps arrived in California in time to participate in the active measures of conquest or occupation.

The expedition against Chihuahua was contemplated at Washington soon after the first news of the commencement of hostilities on the Rio Grande was received. The end of the expedition, although not explicitly set forth in any published official correspondence of the government of the United States, could hardly have been other than to further the scheme of cutting off the northern provinces of Mexico, the population of which various persons then in Washington represented as being exceedingly dissatisfied with the central government, and ripe for revolt. The country was not well known, the only direct route by which travelers and merchants from the United States usual-

ly proceeded being that from Fort Leavenworth, by Santa Fé, to Chihuahua. That presented many difficulties, besides the length of the march from Fort Leavenworth; and Port Lavaca, in Texas, was early selected as the point of starting for the expedition.

That it was for some time contemplated at Washington to continue the cordon across the continent, and to cut off the northern provinces, and that it was deemed that this expedition was in part to effect such object, is evident from the inquiries made of General Taylor concerning the route from Chihuahua to the port of Guyamas, on the Pacific. But the whole expedition was an experiment on the part of the government, as, indeed, isolated operations of war generally are, and General Wool, who was to command it, was placed under the orders of General Taylor, in order that such dispositions might be made as the service should require, either for the furtherance of his own movements or for the continuation of the cordon across the continent.*

The point of concentration of the troops of Wool's command was San Antonio de Bexar, in Texas. Taylor's instructions to Wool were not issued until the 14th of August, and, from the nature of things, they were exceedingly indefinite. Taylor considered him, although nominally under his or-

* The Adjutant General to General Wool. Executive Document, No. 60. House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 328, and the Secretary of War to General Taylor. *Idem*, p. 324.

ders, as being charged with the conduct of a separate expedition;* and the letter of Major Bliss, assistant adjutant general to General Wool, of the 14th of August, contained nothing positive but an order to march on Chihuahua, with such portion of his force as could be subsisted en route. The remainder of the letter was filled with suggestions, and with such information of the proposed route as General Taylor possessed; but all things save the destination were left to the discretion of General Wool.†

Having made arrangements for the concentration of his command at San Antonio, on the 8th of August, Wool, in person, left Port Lavaca. His forces consisted of five companies of United States dragoons, one of light artillery (six pieces), three of the sixth infantry, one regiment of Arkansas cavalry, two of Illinois infantry, and one company of Kentucky infantry—in all, about 3000 men. Of these different corps, two companies of dragoons had been stationed at San Antonio from the time of the occupation of Texas, and their commander, Colonel Harney, growing restive in the inactivity of the station, had raised a volunteer force of Texans and Indians, and made an abortive attempt to pass the border and foray in Mexico; but it had been a failure, and his regular troops returned to San Antonio. The Arkansas troops, the companies

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, October 15th, 1846. Executive Document, No 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 351.

† Major Bliss to General Wool. *Idem*, p. 410.

of the sixth infantry, and the remaining regular dragoons, had made the march by land from the Arkansas frontier. Washington's battery had marched through the country from Carlisle barracks in Pennsylvania. The volunteer infantry and the material of the train had been brought by water transport from the mouth of the Mississippi to Port Lavaca, whence they were brought up to San Antonio. The train which had been organized for the expedition was immense, in comparison with the number of troops which were to compose it; and the appropriation of the means of land transport for it, under the direction of General Wool, while he was in person at New Orleans, doubtless caused some of the embarrassment so grievously complained of at a subsequent period by General Taylor.

On the 8th of October Wool arrived with his advanced division at the Presidio Rio Grande. On the 11th he passed the river by a flying bridge, and, having thrown up a temporary tête du pont and redoubt to protect the passage of the rear column, which was following with additional supplies, he garrisoned the works with two companies, and moved in advance. There were but few Mexican troops in his front, and what there were of militia and cavalry of the Presidio fled rapidly before him or dispersed. On the 24th he reached Santa Rosa, a point whence three routes led to Chihuahua. Of the three, however, two were but mule trails, impassable for wagons or artillery, and, from the scarcity of water and subsistence, were

impracticable for any kind of military movement. The third led southward, through Monclova and Parras, turned to the north in the State of Durango, and thence continued to Chihuahua. It was an immense circuit, but the only route by which the destination of the column could be reached from the east, and it was therefore chosen.

On the 29th the column arrived at Monclova, the former capital of the State of Coahuila and Texas, and immediate measures were taken to establish a depôt, for the reason, as it was said, and a very evident one, that it was out of the question to depend longer for supplies upon the United States by the route from Fort Lavaca or the Rio Grande. From this point a communication was opened with Monterey ; and with a view of obtaining authority to penetrate further to the south, General Wool asked of General Taylor what was to be gained by going to Chihuahua. General Taylor's opinion and action were set forth in his letter to Mr. Marcy of November 9th, three days before the receipt of the secretary's dispatch of October 22d, in which he stated that he was free to answer "nothing at all commensurate with the excessive length of his line of operations," and also that he had ordered General Wool to remain at Monclova, where he could obtain subsistence, until the disposition of his column could be determined upon.*

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 361.

In the mean while, however, doubts as to the anticipated benefit to the American cause in the prosecution of the war through the expedition to Chihuahua had arisen at Washington, and in the letter of Mr. Marcy of the 22d (before referred to), it was suggested that the column should be united with the forces on the Rio Grande or at Monterey, where it would be available for other and more active operations, either on the Gulf coast or on the line already pursued; but the matter was left entirely to the discretion of the general.*

As Taylor had already taken action so far as to order the suspension of the movement, and these views coincided with his own, the receipt of the dispatch decided the matter, and soon after Wool was ordered to locate himself at Parras. On the 24th of November he broke up from Monclova and marched, leaving a guard of 250 men over the newly-established depôt. On the 5th of December he reached his designated post, and the Chihuahua expedition was abandoned—the so-called “army of the center” became merged in that of occupation.

The expedition, undertaken as it was upon inaccurate data, and without any proper knowledge of the proposed theater of operations, was without any benefit to the American cause. Indeed, so far as it wasted material and money in the expedition, it was a positive injury, for the country through which it marched was comparatively worthless.

* The Secretary of War to General Taylor. Executive Document, No 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 365.

In that fact was the cause of the failure of the scheme of cutting off the northern provinces of Mexico; for, detached and worthless to the central government as they were, to attempt to reduce its power or to conquer its obstinacy by their isolation was like lopping the decayed and topmost branches of a tree to bring it to the ground.

The operations of the American naval squadron in the Gulf of Mexico for some time after the commencement of the war were confined to keeping up a blockade, which had been established immediately after the first acts of positive hostility. The duty was one which, although it afforded but little opportunity for the display of that action which is alone popular in war, and which gives fame to those engaged, yet required no small degree of vigilance and activity.

The United States having no part in the great European contests of the period of the French revolutions, had, almost from the first, contended for a liberal construction of the law of blockade, for the advantage, at the time, of their own commerce. In order to establish the precedent and custom of the law, and to act in consistency with their former demands upon other nations, they were obliged, now that for the first time they were called upon to enforce a blockade, to allow their demanded construction, which they did. According to this, it was necessary, to render a vessel subject to seizure and

condemnation, that she should first be warned off by one of the vessels of the blockading squadron before the port which she attempted to enter. Should she effect an entrance without such warning, she was free to depart without molestation or hinderance.

The nature of the Mexican ports, especially of the principal one, Vera Cruz, was such as to render the enforcement of such a blockade a matter of exceeding difficulty. Heavy north winds prevail in the Mexican Gulf throughout the year to a greater or less extent, though their particular violence is during the winter months. In these, a neutral vessel could enter the harbor of Vera Cruz by the northern channel, and cast anchor in the port or fasten to rings in the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa, while the vessels of the blockading squadron were forced to take shelter under the islands to the southward. Under such circumstances, several neutral vessels ran the blockade with impunity, notwithstanding the exertions of the naval officers.

But upon a country like Mexico, where the ordinary articles of foreign commerce are in a great measure prohibited, and where most, if not all, the resources for subsistence are entirely interior, the blockade could have been effective only so far as it deprived her of the moral aid which she would have derived from an unrestricted intercourse with foreign nations, and prevented the introduction of arms and munitions of war; for the revenue which Mexico had at any time derived from her imports

had been trifling in comparison with her expenses, and it was hardly equal to the expense of keeping up the blockading squadron.

In effect upon Mexican military power, the naval operations were not very positive, for at no time did Commodore Connor deem his squadron of sufficient strength to attack the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa. From its ramparts the Mexican garrison, confident in the strength of the repaired works, looked with but little apprehension of the issue. Indeed, had the garrison consisted of good and brave artillerists, it is doubtful whether any naval force could have accomplished its capture, armed as it was at that time.

In the months of July and August, the attention of Commodore Connor was directed to the port of Alvarado, sixty miles to the south of Vera Cruz, as several small Mexican vessels of war had taken shelter in the river which there emptied into the Gulf of Mexico, and as a small commerce was occasionally carried on through it.

A few days of settled weather having occurred in the early part of August, he proceeded thither with the small vessels of his squadron. Arriving off the port on the 7th of August, he threw a few shot from his flag ship at the fort which commanded the entrance. The crew of a launch, sent in to reconnoiter, also exchanged musketry with a party of Mexicans, which had taken position to oppose a landing, but the firing had little effect on either side. The demonstration, however, aroused

the Mexican population of the vicinity, and militia from Tlacotalpam and other villages flocked in to resist the invasion in the course of the following days. But, in the mean time, the attempt was given up by the American commodore, on account of the swollen state of the river, and the return of bad weather in the night.*

Another attempt to effect an entrance was made on the 15th of October, with no better success. Some small vessels entered the river and engaged the batteries at its mouth, but the steamer, having the second division in tow, grounded on the bank, and left them without support. The Mississippi steamship, which it had been intended should cannonade the batteries, was unable to approach near enough to do any injury to the enemy, and, under all these circumstances, the flotilla was withdrawn.

The same disposition which had been manifested by the Mexicans in the neighborhood on the former occasion was manifested on this, and, as the American force withdrew, they congratulated themselves upon a most brilliant victory. The event was the subject of special congratulation in the city of Mexico, for it was almost the only semblance of success which had resulted from any Mexican operations, either in offense or defense. The officers who had been in command were especially extolled for bravery and good conduct, and

* Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 630, 631.

it was proposed to confer upon the town of Alvarado the title of *Heroic*.

The result could not have been other than mortifying to the American commodore, though he sustained no loss, and the object of the expedition was of but little importance. Certainly, if he had been successful, at that immediate period his success could have had no effect upon the operations of the war.

Having returned to Anton Lizardo, on the 16th Commodore Connor sent an expedition, composed of the Mississippi steamer and all the small vessels of the squadron, under command of Commodore Perry, against the towns on the River Tobasco.

The flotilla arrived off the mouth of the river on the 23d, and, having left the Mississippi at anchor outside, the commodore entered with the small vessels, seized the town of Frontera, and captured two Mexican steamers and a schooner. On the next morning he proceeded up the river with the greater portion of his force, and reached Tobasco without opposition on the 25th. Five merchant vessels in the port were captured, and the town was summoned to surrender. But the Mexican authorities were stubborn, and replied to the summons that the American commander might open fire whenever he pleased. He accordingly did, and soon after sent a party of sailors and marines ashore, between whom and the townspeople an irregular, spattering fire was exchanged for some time, with but little effect. The guns of the flotilla were, dur-

ing its continuance, worked upon the town until near night, when the firing ceased, and the party ashore was re-embarked.

On the following morning the Mexicans opened a fire of musketry from the shore, which was returned from the flotilla by a cannonade. In the midst of the fire a white flag was shown, and a communication from the foreign merchants was presented to the commodore, praying for a suspension of hostilities, as most of the property in the town which was subject to damage belonged to them. In consideration of their representations, Perry agreed to take no further hostile action, provided he was not attacked from the shore as he was leaving the place. But, while he was making preparations for dropping down the stream, one of his prizes grounded, and the Mexicans, having occupied two houses on the bank in its vicinity, commenced a fire which mortally wounded Lieutenant Morris, and wounded three seamen. The guns of the flotilla were, in consequence, reopened, and their fire continued until that of the Mexicans was silenced.

No further opposition was experienced, and, having cleared the river, the whole flotilla, with all the prizes of any value, arrived in safety at Anton Lizardo.*

* Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 632, 633.

CHAPTER VII.

Views of American Authorities at Washington—Intended Expedition against Tampico—Ill Feeling of General Taylor toward the War Department—Its Cause—His Recommendation of taking up a defensive Line—*Observations*—Termination of Armistice—Advance to Saltillo—Occupation of Tampico—Action of General Patterson—Movement on Victoria—Taylor's Views and Intentions—*Observations*—False Alarms at Saltillo—Concentration of Force at that Point—Occupation of Victoria.

WHILE the army of occupation was slowly progressing toward Monterey, and in the absence of any concerted plan of operations, the attention of the war department was given to the prosecution of the war upon the Gulf coast. The immediate subject under consideration was the propriety of an expedition against Tampico, with a view to its seizure for use in future operations. On the 2d of September Mr. Marcy addressed a letter to General Taylor, in which the views which he then entertained were expressed, and various advantages to be hoped from the expedition were suggested.* The letter, however, contained no positive directions, and General Taylor's views upon the practicability and advantage of the expedition were requested. This dispatch was intercepted by the enemy, and had effect, although not in the manner which might have been anticipated.

In his dispatch of the 22d of September, which

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 339.

communicated the refusal of the new Mexican government to enter upon negotiations, Mr. Marcy again wrote on the subject, and the instructions set forth were of a more positive character. Having stated the course of action which had been determined upon at Washington (that of vigorously prosecuting the war), the propriety of discontinuing the policy of conciliation of the inhabitants, which had so far been persisted in, and of raising contributions for the support of the war, was presented to the consideration of the general, and he was instructed to raise them, if in that method he could obtain supplies for his army. But, in regard to the expedition against Tampico, it was stated that the determination of the war department was fixed, unless the organization and force of the expedition should interfere with General Taylor's arrangements, and weaken his effectual strength. The officers for its command were designated, and, in order to prevent delay, instructions were sent direct to General Patterson, then at Camargo, to prepare as far as possible for the movement.*

This dispatch was received by General Taylor on the 10th of October, while he was at Monterey making arrangements for the supply of his army, and determining plans for future operations and action. The subject matter was the cause of indignation against the war department, inasmuch as direct instructions had been given to an officer un-

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 341-343.

der his command to prepare for an expedition to be composed in great part of his troops. In the violation of a general rule, the cause was undoubtedly a just one; for "*nothing is so important in war as an undivided command*,"* and, under all ordinary circumstances, any thing which militates against the principle can produce nothing but evil. The meddling on the part of the war department had no good effect in this case, inasmuch as it created ill feeling on the part of the commanding general, and the proposed expedition was delayed by his orders. But it had its origin in the want of an understanding with the general, and of a settled plan of operations; and as the general had been unable to extend his views beyond the experimental march to Monterey, had postponed every thing until his arrival at that place, had expressed serious doubts as to the practicability of advancing beyond, and had, moreover, stated that he had a surplus force at his disposal, some portion of the blame of the interference might well have been laid to the force of circumstances and the nature of his own dispatches. In the reply to Mr. Marcy's letter of July 9th, written on the 1st of August, after having suggested the various difficulties and doubts which occurred to his mind in the adoption of the course suggested by the secretary, General Taylor had written as follows: "I have already had occasion to represent to the department that the volunteer force ordered to report

* Napoleon.

to me here is much greater than I can possibly employ—at any rate, in the first instance: the influx of twelve months' volunteers has even impeded my operations, by engrossing all the resources of the quarter-master's department to land them and transport them to healthy positions. This circumstance, in connection with the possibility of an expedition against ——, leads me to regret that one division of volunteers had not been encamped, say at Pass Christian, where it could have been instructed until its services were required in the field."*

From the usual time required for communication, this letter must have reached Washington between the 15th and 20th of August, and no other correspondence was received from General Taylor on the subject of the general operations of the war for some months. Wherefore, it is not surprising that the war department, having been informed of its error in sending out too large a number of troops, should have sought to give employment to the surplus, and relieve the commanding general and his quarter-master's department of some portion of their burden. Suggested as the movement had been in the dispatch of September 2d, it can hardly be wondered at that, when the refusal to negotiate had been received from the new Mexican government, and it had been determined to prosecute the war with vigor, as a measure of policy, positive in-

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 337.

structions were given for the preparations to be made. The violation of the rules of war and of the service, in communicating directly with the commander of troops which were lying idle in dépôt, could not have been considered very flagrant.

But when the dispatch reached General Taylor's head-quarters, his views had undergone a decided change. He had marched upon Monterey with the force with which he had originally intended, had driven the enemy from many of his positions, had negotiated a convention, agreed to an armistice of eight weeks, and had enjoyed two weeks' observation upon the agricultural capacity of the country. But the bloody struggle which had taken place on the eastern side of Monterey, the various checks which had there been encountered, and the fortuitous circumstances which had in so great a measure contributed to the success—in fact, the whole course of the operations, so different from that which had been anticipated, while they had changed his position, must have exercised no small influence upon his intentions and views. In three letters, which contained replies to the subjects alluded to in the secretary's letter, he said nothing definite about the capacity of the country around Monterey to support 6000, or any other number of troops, to ascertain which the movement had been made, and much less did he say any thing about a surplus force on the Rio Grande.

The first of these three letters was written on the 12th of October, and contained only a reason for

not at once proceeding with the Tampico expedition, on account of the terms of the convention of Monterey.*

The second bore date on the 15th, and was written for the purpose of giving other and more detailed views in relation to the same subject, for the information of the general-in-chief and the secretary of war. It was said, "Such a point has been reached in the conduct of the war and the progress of our arms as to make it proper to place my impressions and convictions very fully before the government."† In pursuance of this design, the letter set forth that he considered General Wool to be virtually independent of his command, and that the force under that officer formed no part of the estimate for future operations. After a statement of the facts as regarded the topography of the country, General Taylor treated of the movement upon San Luis, and stated that the column which, in his belief, would be requisite to enable him to advance, should consist of at least 20,000 men, of which one half should be regulars. The forces under his command were rapidly enumerated with a view to the contingency, and, according to the enumeration, he could command no more than 10,000 after having left 3000 to cover his communications. With this statement of requisite and present force, he proceeded to give his views in relation to the proper

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 350.

† Idem. Idem, p. 351.

future operations of the war, which will be best understood from his own language.

“The department may be assured that the above views have not been given without mature reflection, and have been the result of experience and careful inquiry. It will be for the government to determine whether the war shall be prosecuted by directing an active campaign against San Luis and the capital, or whether the country already gained shall be held and a defensive attitude assumed. In the latter case, the general line of the Sierra Madre might very well be taken ; but even then, with the enemy in force in my front, it might be imprudent to detach to Tampico so large a force as three or four thousand men, particularly of the description required for that operation. If the co-operation of the army, therefore, be deemed essential to the success of the expedition against Tampico, I trust that it will be postponed for the present.”

* * *

* * * “It may be expected that I should give my views as to the policy of occupying a defensive line, to which I have above alluded. I am free to confess that, in view of the difficulties and expense attending a movement into the heart of the country, and particularly in view of the unsettled and revolutionary character of the Mexican government, the occupation of such a line seems to me to be the best course that can be adopted. The line taken might either be that on which we propose to insist as the boundary between the republics—say

the Rio Grande—or the line to which we have advanced, viz., the Sierra Madre, including Chihuahua and Santa Fé. The former line could be held with a much smaller force than the latter ; but even the line of the Sierra Madre could be held with a much smaller force than would be required for an active campaign. Monterey controls the great outlet from the interior. A strong garrison at this point, with an advance at Saltillo, and small corps at Monclova, Linares, Victoria, and Tampico, would effectually cover the line.”*

The contemplated movement upon the Mexican capital by the southern route was briefly noticed, and 25,000 men, of which 10,000 should be regular troops, was, in his opinion, the minimum force with which it should be undertaken. The letter concluded with a severe animadversion upon the conduct of the Secretary of War, in corresponding directly with General Patterson, and against it General Taylor earnestly protested.

The third letter in reply was written on the 26th, and informed the department that the project of raising contributions upon the country was impracticable.†

These communications were not received at Washington until late in the month of November. During the interval several letters were sent from the War Department to General Taylor, including

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 353.

† Idem. Idem, p. 354.

that of October 13th, disapproving of the armistice, and ordering its close. Nearly all of them had reference to the movement upon Tampico, or a detached expedition to Vera Cruz, the organization of which at Washington was the subject of General Taylor's animadversion. General Taylor's letters in the following months were in explanation of his movements, and in deprecation of the interference with his command, which was in some degree continued. The different papers will be noticed in other places, and in their order.

But, before the receipt of General Taylor's dispatch of October 15th, important changes had been made at Washington, and General Scott had been ordered to the field. In consequence, the views of none of the correspondents were carried out in full, and the papers are in themselves more interesting, as showing the opinions of the different authorities upon military operations, and in regard to each other, than as having any positive effect upon the movements of the war. They are, besides, demonstrative of the difficulties which attend the prosecution of military operations by the authorities of any nation, when the fundamental principles of the art are disregarded by either government or generals.

The reasons for the action of the authorities at Washington, which caused the main object of the war to be neglected, while attention was given to partial operations, and the latest of these in conception to be ordered independent of the general

commanding in the field, have been noticed from time to time. They are to be attributed to the ardent desire for the vigorous prosecution of the war, and the want of concert with General Taylor, and to the views set forth in the letters of that officer. However much energy of thought or talent was displayed in the plans, and in the celerity with which they were proposed as fast as they were objected to, and laid aside on account of the want of coincidence in General Taylor's views, yet the attempt to direct detailed operations from a distance of over one thousand miles could have been successful under hardly any circumstances, and the result proved it. The absence of ulterior object in the views of military operations presented by General Taylor prior to the capture of Monterey, is fully apparent in the extracts from his correspondence which have been quoted. But, at the time of writing his letter of October 15th, he had been successful in the operations which he had previously undertaken; he had conquered the Mexican army in strong defensive positions, in force one half greater than his own, in a manner which, inasmuch as the struggle had been severe, and the bravery of his troops had been conspicuously displayed, had reflected glory on the American arms, and to a degree enhanced his reputation as a military commander; he had enjoyed time for observation, and in that letter was presented the first definite recommendation of future policy.

The considerations of the length of the route to

San Luis de Potosi, stated in that letter, had been in great part known, and in a degree considered, before the march on Monterey. And if the topography of the country and the length of the route were to be reasons for abandoning the project of moving upon Mexico by that route, why were they not considered at an earlier date? The other consideration presented was the small amount of force which General Taylor had at his disposal. Although in his previous letters he had stated that it would be sufficient,* October 15th it was deemed to be too small by half, inasmuch as he was in possession of information that General Santa Anna was concentrating a force at San Luis. Unless General Taylor had based his military plans upon anticipated results of doubtful diplomatic action, and believed that, in consequence of Santa Anna's return to Mexico, of which he had been informed, his advance would be entirely unopposed, it is difficult to see any reason for the difference in the views which he expressed on the 1st of August and on the 15th of October. Whoever exercised the chief Mexican authority, it might have been expected, so long as the war continued, that a force would be concentrated at San Luis. But, whatever reasons may have been found in the latter consideration for halting near Monterey, much

* "If a column (say 10,000 men) can be sustained in provisions at Saltillo, it may advance thence upon San Luis de Potosi, and, I doubt not, would speedily bring proposals for peace."—*General Taylor to the President. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 337.*

more cogent had been presented in the length of the route and the difficulties of the country; and when the subject was resumed on the 15th of October, with but little additional information, except that derived from experience at Monterey, General Taylor recommended the abandonment of the idea of moving on the capital of Mexico from the northern base of operations.

The requisite conditions necessary for the movement by Vera Cruz, proposed by him, rendered such an expedition impracticable at the time. Ten thousand regulars were stated to be requisite. The United States hardly had that number in service, and General Taylor had then no intention of dispensing with any large body of that description of force from his own command.

The recommendation which he made of taking up a defensive line was considered by many distinguished men as having merit. If it were intended to appropriate the soil of the country between the Rio Grande and the Sierra Madre, and hold it as the property of the United States until increased population should render it valuable, it would then have been a question how large an amount of force should have been employed for the purpose.

If it were intended that the army should retire to the Rio Grande, it would have been as well to have published to Mexico and to the world that, notwithstanding American preparations and the bravery of American soldiers, the United States gave up the contest, and were confessedly unable to carry on a

foreign war. It would have been a retreat without military cause and without honor, and the comparison between the preparations and the action of the American government would have been a lasting subject for the ridicule of other nations.

If by holding a defensive line it were expected to force Mexico to make peace, a slight reference to her action in regard to Texas might have shown how fallacious was the anticipation. And if the line of the Sierra Madre were taken, the question arose, In what manner would the occupation injure the resources of the central government? Certainly they could not have been effected by the occupation of the line of the Rio Grande. At the time of making the recommendation, General Taylor knew that the Mexican general-in-chief had ordered the complete abandonment of the country; for he stated that, on the date of his letter, the last detachment of Ampudia's force was to leave Saltillo.* If the Mexican general thought no exertion necessary to defend the country, he could hardly have deemed it valuable. If he could have collected any resources from it, wherefore did he abandon it six weeks before the termination of the armistice, until which time he was at liberty to hold undisturbed possession of a great portion?

The next question for consideration was whether the occupation of the country was a benefit to the United States in a military point of view. If it

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 351.

were of none to Mexico, it would have been fair to suppose that it would be of none to them, and, as if to furnish a conclusive argument against his own recommendation, eleven days after it was made, General Taylor wrote that this same country was "*poor*,"* and that it was impracticable to obtain any subsistence or material without purchasing at the prices of the country.

The dispatch of the Secretary of War of October 13th having been received, which ordered the termination of the armistice, the execution of the scheme of taking up a defensive line was nevertheless commenced. On the 6th of November an officer was dispatched to Saltillo with a note addressed to General Santa Anna, then at San Luis de Potosi, informing him that, by the order of the United States government, the armistice would be at an end on the 13th of the month. In the mean time, preparations were made for throwing forward a corps to Saltillo, which it had been intended should march from Monterey on the 12th. But, having learned that a bearer of dispatches was on the way to his headquarters, General Taylor postponed the movement for a day, and received a communication from the Secretary of War, dated October 22d.†

It related to an expedition against Vera Cruz, and made known the intention of the President to send a force of four thousand men to that place,

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 354.

† Idem. Idem, p. 375.

which was deemed to be sufficient for success, with the co-operation of the navy, provided the expedition could be kept secret until the descent was made. It was believed that of the four thousand troops, fifteen hundred or two thousand ought to be regulars, and these were to be drawn from General Taylor's command.

The other portions of the letter were extensive, but related to matters which were either unimportant in themselves or had been in a measure settled at a previous period, either by the force of circumstances or the action of the general. In regard to the Vera Cruz expedition, views and intentions were given in detail and extent, and it was intended that the expedition should be announced as destined for Tampico.* Events, however, prevented the adoption of this plan. In reply to the letter, General Taylor wrote on the 12th of November, and with reason, that the force proposed to be sent was in his opinion entirely too small for the object. Ten thousand men he conceived to be the minimum with which to invest and hold Vera Cruz, with a view to holding the position. At this time, having settled his plans for occupying a line, he believed that, after completing his dispositions, he could spare four thousand troops, of which three thousand might be regulars, from his force. He proposed to make the movement upon Tampico after securing the posi-

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 363-366.

tions immediately in advance of Monterey, by the route through the interior of the country, and it was believed that no delay would be produced by it if his views were adopted.* But his views were not adopted, more than were the plans proposed in the secretary's letter fulfilled.

On the 13th of November General Taylor marched, with two squadrons of dragoons and General Worth's command (Duncan's battery, artillery battalion, and fifth and eighth regiments of infantry), for Saltillo. While en route, he received General Santa Anna's answer to the communication which he had addressed, announcing the termination of the armistice. Its remarkable point was that which replied to the hope which General Taylor had expressed of a speedy restoration of peace, and he was informed that he "ought to discard all ideas of peace while a single North American treads, in arms, the territory of this republic, or while hostile squadrons remain in front of her ports." This avowal of the policy and determination of his government was, however, closed by General Santa Anna, as it usually had been in other cases, by shifting the responsibility upon the extraordinary Mexican Congress which was to meet on the 6th of December.†

On the morning of the 16th, as the column approached Saltillo, and within a few miles of the

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 375.

† General Santa Anna to General Taylor. *Idem*, p. 438.

town, a messenger placed a protest against the occupation of the State of Coahuila in the hands of General Taylor. It was signed by the governor, who had been elected on the previous day, and had but time to perform this one official act. He stated that his intentions were good for resistance, but, inasmuch as he possessed no means of supporting them in arms, he had fled early in the morning, leaving behind him this exponent of his ill temper.* No attention was paid to the protest, and Worth's troops at once occupied the city.

Having made arrangements for subsistence, and, from Saltillo, issued the order for General Wool to take post at Parras, Taylor returned to Monterey to complete his arrangements for taking up his defensive line.

About this time possession of Tampico, which was to have been one of the objects of his movement, had been gained. The dispatch of the Secretary of War of September 2d, and which had been intercepted by the Mexicans, had announced to Santa Anna that Tampico was about to become a point of attack. In the pursuit of his policy, he ordered its abandonment; and, having destroyed and secreted the guns and public stores in the place, the garrison retreated beyond the mountains. In the mean time, Commodore Connor, at Anton Lizardo, had been preparing to attack the place with his flotilla.

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Jose Maria d'Aguirre to General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 377, 378.

It arrived off the bar of the Panuco on the 14th, and on the following morning entered the river in safety. On approaching the town, a deputation from the Ayuntamiento came on board with proposals for its surrender.* The town was at once occupied, and the news having been communicated to General Patterson, then at Camargo, employed in preparing for the expedition, under the directions of the Secretary of War, that officer immediately dispatched six companies of artillery, under Lieutenant-colonel Belton, to hold it. These were quickly followed by a regiment of Alabama volunteers, and Patterson soon after ordered the Illinois brigade, then at Matamoras, to take transport for Tampico, intending to proceed thither in person, and assume the command.†

His movements were, however, soon checked, for Taylor, having received information of his intentions, at once sent counter orders, as far as related to the Illinois brigade and himself. The movement of the six companies of artillery was approved, and that of the Alabama regiment was permitted. With a rebuke for his unauthorized action to so full an extent, Patterson was ordered to march, with a regiment of Tennessee horse and the Illinois brigade, from Matamoras, to join General

* Commodore Connor to the Secretary of the Navy. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1172.

† Official Correspondence. General Patterson and Major Bliss. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 383-385.

Taylor at Victoria, whither he was about to proceed from Monterey.* The arrangements for that movement had been completed before General Taylor had learned of the occupation of Tampico, but that occasioned little modification of his plans.

On the 8th of December he wrote to the adjutant general that in a few days he expected to leave for Victoria, and proceeded to give at length the dispositions which he had made, and which he contemplated, for the occupation and defense of the line. These were, in general, to stretch his forces from Parras to Tampico, a line of over six hundred miles, occupying Saltillo and Victoria as intermediate positions, and keeping a reserve at Monterey. He proposed to continue the use of the Rio Grande as the channel of communication and supply for the western portion of his line, but to establish a depôt at Soto la Marina whence to supply Victoria. After having distributed his forces along the cordon, and placed any surplus which he might have in position to receive the orders of the government, and completed his examination of the passes of the mountains, he intended, unless otherwise instructed, to return with a portion of the regular troops, and establish his head-quarters in advance of Saltillo, which, he wrote, "after all, I consider to be our most important point."

This disposition had many disadvantages in a

* Official Correspondence. General Patterson and Major Bliss. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 383-385.

strictly military point of view, which did not altogether escape the notice of General Taylor. In his letter of the 8th, he wrote concerning them in the following language:

"It will be seen at once that San Luis Potosi is a position almost equally distant from the points of this line. This would give a force at San Luis a very great advantage over us, were it not for the nature of the country and the communications; the region between San Luis and the mountains being scantily supplied with water and subsistence, and the road by Saltillo and Monterey being the only practicable route for artillery across the mountains. Without artillery, the Mexican troops are not at all formidable, and I think have but little confidence in themselves. I therefore consider the positions of Saltillo and Parras as of prime importance. With an intermediate post at Patos, and the means, by a good road, of rapidly uniting, if necessary, I deem the columns of Brigadiers General Wool and Worth quite equal to hold that flank of the line." * * *

* * * "Tampico is now garrisoned by eight strong companies of artillery and the Alabama regiment of volunteers, say 1000 effectives. I consider this force quite sufficient to hold the place, controlling, as we do, the harbor. Between Tampico and this place (Monterey) Victoria offers itself as an important position to be held by us. It is the capital of the State of Tamaulipas; it is situated at the debouchee of the pass of the mountains,

and it has a post, *Soto la Marina*, where we shall probably be able to establish a convenient dépôt. It also threatens the flank of the Mexican army, should it advance from San Luis. These considerations attracted my attention to Victoria before the surrender of Tampico; but I now deem it more than ever important, for I have every reason to believe that a corps of observation is in that quarter, under the orders of General Urrea, having its head-quarters, perhaps, at Tula, and sending forward advanced parties as far as Victoria. I have therefore changed nothing in my original purpose of moving on Victoria, believing it important to occupy that point, and knowing that any surplus force would then be in position for the ulterior views of the government, should any further operations on the Gulf coast be ordered."*

This disposition, by which the American army was stationed at points equidistant from San Luis, certainly gave a force at that point an advantage, unless it was neutralized by the nature of the country, and it is questionable whether it was. General Taylor had said, on the 15th of October, in reference to the dispositions which he was about to make, that it was enough for his argument in favor of the views then presented to know that a heavy force was collecting in his front. With this in view, as that force certainly had not been diminished during the interval, and the declaration made on

* Official Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 379.

the 8th of December that he considered Saltillo, after all, the most important point of the line, a glance at the nature of the country about that point and of the dispositions which he had made may not be misplaced. Worth, with a force of 1200 men and eight guns, for his artillery had been increased by Captain Taylor's field battery, was located at Saltillo, and Wool, with near 3000 men and six guns, at Parras, to his southwest. The only communication between these points which was practicable for trains or artillery, led from Saltillo along the road to San Luis de Potosi, as far as the hacienda of La Encantada, and thence by the road to Zacatecas to San Juan de la Vaqueria, whence there was a direct route to Parras. It was one day's march for infantry from Saltillo to La Encantada, and full four days from that point to Parras. For the two corps to effect a junction in case of threatened attack by a superior force, that junction must have been made at La Encantada, or Wool would be obliged to pass it en route to Saltillo. Now the whole country in advance of La Encantada, in the direction of San Luis, was open to the enemy, and traversed by parties of his cavalry. At any time he could advance within one day's long march of that point without the possibility of the commander at Saltillo being informed of his movement, as was afterward fully demonstrated. If this were the case with reference to Saltillo, it was certainly so with reference to Parras, even had there been an intermediate post at Patos, a point some

distance from San Juan de la Vaqueria. Wherefore, in case Santa Anna did choose to advance and attempt to seize the salient point of concentration, Worth would have been obliged to move up to La Encantada, and maintain himself at that point, or in advance of it, with his small force against the Mexican army for at least three days, or Wool was cut off beyond the possibility of succor. The first of these was a hazardous undertaking, to say the least—if I do not say impracticable, it is because of the remembrance of the deeds of American soldiers. The second speaks for itself; and if Wool had been able to maintain himself, it would have been by the hard fighting of his troops and through his own efforts, certainly not on account of any merit in the general dispositions. Monterey, three days' march in rear of Saltillo, was four from La Encantada, wherefore re-enforcement could arrive from that point no sooner than from Parras.

It was known by General Taylor that General Santa Anna would have many difficulties to overcome before he could prepare an expedition. While, therefore, if he wished to draw resources from the country about Parras, it might have been safe to have allowed this disposition to remain for a short period, each succeeding day made the situation of the force at either point more precarious. He depended to a degree upon the scarcity of water along the line of his enemy's march. If this were sufficient to check a movement, certainly Saltillo was not the most important point in the line.

As was afterward apparent, the whole nature of that route was not understood. But whatever resources it had were in the hands of the enemy.

While this state of things existed along the western portion of the line, General Taylor, having tarried some twenty days at Monterey, a period of just about sufficient length for General Santa Anna to have been accurately informed of the disposition, and to have prepared to take advantage of it, commenced his movement upon Victoria; and the propriety of that may be remarked upon.

If a permanent garrison were located at Victoria, it would have been isolated, for it was at least nine days' march from Monterey and Camargo, twelve from Matamoras, and ten from Tampico. The only object which could have in reality been accomplished by the occupation was to cover the passes in the mountains, which were not practicable for artillery, without which it was considered that Mexican troops were not at all formidable, and to secure the communications from the Rio Grande to Monterey from the annoyance of parties of Mexican cavalry coming through the passes. To have been effective, these parties must have passed unsupported and far from support in close proximity to permanent American garrisons in any case; for it was out of the question to keep up the land communication between Monterey and Tampico. Whether, therefore, the advantage to be gained by occupying Victoria, and keeping open communications with it from any other point, and

establishing a new depôt at Soto la Marina, was at all commensurate with the trouble of the undertaking, even if Saltillo and Parras had been secure, is very questionable. As for the proposed threat on the Mexican flank should Santa Anna advance, it was without reason. If the Mexican troops could not pass the mountains with artillery, the Americans could not. If the contingency had arisen, and the attempt been made, the small body of American troops would have presented itself upon the Mexican line, close to its base, having first been obliged to force the Tula pass, which, if Santa Anna had any prudence, would have been found guarded. If successful, it could have accomplished nothing; for if Santa Anna beat the American army about Saltillo, it was gone; if Santa Anna was beaten, it was exposed to be run over in the retreat, unless it retired precipitately beyond the mountains. In either case, had the event happened, it could have been much better employed with the army near Saltillo. The threat of such an impracticability certainly could have had little effect in any event.

The force with which General Taylor proposed to move from his head-quarters at Monterey upon Victoria consisted of Twiggs's division of regulars, increased by the seventh regiment of infantry, Quitman's brigade of volunteers, and Bragg's and Sherman's field batteries. The second regiment of

United States infantry, and the second Tennessee volunteers, were ordered to march from Camargo to join the main column at Montemorelos; and all these, with Patterson's command, composed the entire strength of the force to be concentrated at the capital of Tamaulipas.

Twiggs moved from Monterey on the 12th, and on the 13th Quitman's brigade followed. On the 17th the advance reached Montemorelos, and effected the junction with the two regiments from Camargo. Taylor arrived with Quitman's force on the following day, and intended to move on the 19th with the whole corps for Victoria; but that evening information was received which delayed the contemplated advance in force.

Worth had employed himself at Saltillo in collecting subsistence and in making reconnaissances during the interval between his occupation of the point and Taylor's movement on Victoria. Becoming acquainted with the country, he became aware of his situation, totally exposed, with a force of but 1200 men and eight guns, and he knew that an advanced corps of Mexican cavalry was within sixty miles of him. Under these circumstances, his pickets intercepted a courier bearing a communication, supposed to be from the acting governor of Coahuila to the commander of the Mexican advance, in which it was suggested that, could he appear at Saltillo in the course of a few days after the receipt of the note, he would encounter but 900 American effectives, and that in his opera-

tions he might count upon the assistance of the townspeople. Information of this was at once sent to Wool at Parras, and to Butler at Monterey.

Wool, who had been marching from Port Lavaca to Parras in search of a battle, and who, in his desire of adventure and fame, had only wished to abandon the Chihuahua expedition in order to penetrate with his single corps still further south in direction of Durango and Zacatecas,* hailed the news as the harbinger of glory to be acquired, as he was senior to Worth. He at once broke up his camp at Parras, and marched with the greatest celerity toward Saltillo, pushing his artillery and cavalry at the rate of forty miles a day. Butler, too, of whose information Wool knew nothing, having ordered forward two regiments of volunteers from Monterey, and having sent the information to General Taylor, started in person for the expected scene of action.

General Taylor, also wishing to be in at the battle, turned back at once from Montemorelos with Twiggs's division. On the 29th he arrived in person at Monterey, and started for Saltillo on the following morning. Having proceeded a few miles on his route, he met a messenger with the intelligence that the *stampede* was over, that Wool and Butler were close to Saltillo, and believing that the force then about that point was quite sufficient for security, he again countermarched Twiggs's division, and returned upon the Victoria expedition.

* Appendix to Capt. Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 174.

The alarm had had the beneficial effect of breaking up the false disposition of the troops about the right flank of the proposed line, and, if it had been got up for that very purpose, would have been a good stroke of policy. The hurried movements, the vexations and annoyances which were its consequences, might have demonstrated some of the inconveniences, if not the dangers, of the contemplated defense of the line, by detached garrisons, at great distances.

Meanwhile Wool had come down toward the valley of La Encantada, where he arrived on the 21st. Hearing that Butler was at Saltillo, he at once turned to the south and encamped at Agua Nueva, but he did not by this maneuver escape from Butler's command. While he was at Agua Nueva another alarm arose, and on the morning of the 25th he sent information to Butler that it was reported that Santa Anna's advance of ten thousand cavalry was in sight beyond the pass in his front, that a large force of infantry was within supporting distance, and that an attack might be expected on that day or the following morning. This information threw the garrison of Saltillo into immediate activity, and a field of battle on the plains south of and above the town was selected, to which Wool was ordered to fall back. But it was soon ascertained that the rumor had its origin in the movement of the regiment of Arkansas cavalry, which had been sent out from Agua Nueva, and had raised such a cloud of dust that some frightened em-

ployées of the subsistence department had mistaken it for the reported Mexican advance, and the alarm was over.

Soon after Wool was ordered to fall back to a position nearer Saltillo, and to break up his large train for the use of the main army. In obedience to the first, he chose his encampment at a point near the hacienda of San Juan de la Buena Vista, on account of its advantages, it being in rear and in close vicinity of a strong position for defense.* He was then within four miles of Saltillo, which was considered too near, and on the following day he was ordered to advance again to the position of La Encantada.

The movement to Victoria was accomplished. On the 29th of December, Quitman, who had continued the march when Taylor countermarched at Montemorelos, occupied the town without resistance, as Urrea's cavalry corps fell back on Tula upon his approach. General Taylor arrived with Twiggs's division on the 4th of January, and Patterson joined on the same day. The expedition had been made throughout without any encounter with the enemy, except that of a detachment of dragoons, under Lieutenant-colonel May, which had its rear guard and baggage cut off by a mob of peons, while engaged in examining the mountain passes. The whole force concentrated at Victoria was of over five thousand men. But nothing had been accomplished except the concentration, and it was not

* Appendix to Capt. Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 178.

long before "the state of supplies"* rendered a movement from the newly-occupied town necessary.

By this time, however, General Taylor had learned that General Scott was in the country, and he proposed waiting his instructions.

CHAPTER VIII.

General Scott proceeds to the Theater of War—Expedition against Vera Cruz
—Official Correspondence—Withdrawal of Troops from the Northern Line
of Operations—*Observations.*

IN the month of November Major-general Scott sailed for Brazos San Jago, for the purpose of superintending the organization and embarkation of the forces which were to compose the strength of the expedition against Vera Cruz, which he was to command. Prior to his departure from Washington, the President had made (under the provisions of the act of May 13, 1846) requisitions for nine new regiments of volunteers, including one of Texas horse. The particular arrangements and preparations of the expedition belong to another portion of this work, and will only be spoken of in

* "But, owing to the *state of supplies*, it became necessary to move the command, and a movement was accordingly ordered in the direction of Tampico."—*General Taylor to Lieutenant Scott, A. D. C., Victoria, July 15th, 1847. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 861.*

this place so far as they affected the disposition of forces and the operations on the northern line.

In a letter to General Taylor, written at New York on the 25th of November, General Scott informed that officer of his approach, and of the necessity of drawing from his command large bodies of troops, which would reduce him to the necessity of acting on the defensive.* On the 20th of December he again wrote, from New Orleans, at greater length, upon the subject of the proposed expedition; and, although his letter failed of effect, as it miscarried, it is yet interesting in those paragraphs which set forth the views which the general-in-chief then entertained. They are, in greater part, the following:

“The particular expedition I am to conduct is destined against Vera Cruz, and, through it, the castle of San Juan d’Ulloa, so as to open, if we are successful, a new and shorter line of operations upon the capital of Mexico.”

“The first great difficulty is to get together in time, and afloat, off the Brazos, a sufficient force to give us a reasonable prospect of success before the usual period, say the end of March, for the return of the black vomit on the coast of Mexico.” * * *

* * * “To make up the force for the new expedition, I foresee that I shall, as I intimated in my letter, of which I inclose a copy, be obliged to

* General Scott to General Taylor, November 25th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 373.

reduce you to the defensive at the moment when it would be of the greatest importance to the success of my expedition that you should be in strength to maneuver offensively in the direction of San Luis Potosi," &c. * * *

* * * "Including the regulars and volunteers at Tampico, or on their way thither, I may now say that I shall want from you, say Worth's division of regulars, made up to 4000 men; two field batteries, say Duncan's and Taylor's, and 500 regular cavalry, besides 500 volunteer cavalry, and as many volunteer foot as you can possibly spare, leaving you a sufficient force to defend Monterey and maintain your communications with Camargo, the mouth of the Rio Grande, and Point Isabel. The whole of this force will be needed at the latter points by the middle of January."*

Upon arriving at Brazos San Jago, General Scott heard of the rumor of a menaced attack upon Saltillo, and of General Taylor's return to Monterey. In consequence, he proceeded up the Rio Grande to Camargo, with the intention of joining the army, should the rumored advance of Santa Anna be true, and, in any event, to be within easy communicating distance.† Before he arrived at Camargo, he learned that the alarm had been false, and that General Taylor had returned to Victoria. He therefore addressed a communication to General Butler,

* General Scott to General Taylor, November 25th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 839.

† General Scott to Mr. Marcy. *Idem*, p. 844.

the second in command, on the 3d of January, in which he stated his intention of embarking troops from Tampico and Brazos San Jago for Vera Cruz, explained his object, and communicated his estimates and orders as follows :

“Of the number of troops at Tampico, and assembled at or in march for Victoria—regulars and volunteers—I can form only a very imperfect estimate, having seen no returns of a late date. My information as to the forces at Saltillo, Monterey, &c., &c., is not much better. I estimate, however, the whole force now under Major-general Taylor’s orders to be about 17,000—seven of regulars and ten of volunteers. Two thousand regulars and five of volunteers I suppose—the whole standing on the defensive—to be necessary to hold Monterey, Serralvo, Camargo, Reynosa, Matamoras, Point Isabel, the Brazos, the mouth of the Rio Grande, and Tampico. I do not enumerate Saltillo and Victoria, because I suppose they may be abandoned or held without hurting or improving the line of defense I have indicated. I wish to give no definite opinion as to either, or as to the other smaller points mentioned above, but to leave them open to the consideration of Major-general Taylor, or, in the first instance, in his absence, to yourself, as you are, no doubt, in possession of his more recent views.” * * *

* * * “You will therefore, without waiting to hear from Major-general Taylor, and without the least unnecessary delay, in order that they may

be in time as above, put in movement for the mouth of the Rio Grande the following troops :

“About 500 regular cavalry of the first and second regiments of dragoons, including Lieutenant Kearney’s troop.”

“About 500 volunteer cavalry—I rely upon you to select the best.”

“Two field batteries of regular light artillery, (say) Duncan’s and Taylor’s,” and

“Four thousand regulars on foot, including artillery acting as infantry—the whole under Brevet Brigadier-general Worth;” * * *

“In addition, put in movement for the same point of embarkation (the Brazos), and to be there as above, 4000 volunteer infantry.”

“Deduct from the above numbers, of regulars and volunteers, as follows :

“The troops at Victoria and at Tampico, less the garrison (say 500) for the latter place, and the escort that Major-general Taylor may need back to Monterey; and also one of the volunteer regiments at Matamoras, I having ordered Colonel Curtis’s regiment to remain there, notwithstanding the arrival of Colonel Drake’s to relieve him. Make no other deductions, unless pressed by the enemy in great force.” * * *

“P.S. I expect to be personally at Tampico, to superintend that part of my expedition which is to embark there, toward the end of this month.”

“The whole of the eight regiments of new foot volunteers will be up with the Brazos, I hope, by

that time. Major-general Taylor may rely upon three, if not four of them, for his immediate command, and make your calculations now for him accordingly."*

A copy of this letter was sent, with one to the same effect directed immediately to General Taylor, to Victoria, through Monterey, and on the 6th other copies were sent to that general from Matamoras.

Butler received his dispatches on the 8th at Saltillo, and at once took steps for carrying the orders into effect. Worth's command, with the addition of five companies of dragoons, and three companies of the sixth infantry from General Wool's column, then at Agua Nueva and Encantada, was put in motion for the mouth of the Rio Grande. The advance left Saltillo on the following morning, and Worth, with the rear guard, on the 10th. The fourth regiment of infantry joined en route at Monterey, and, by rapid movement, on the 22d the advanced corps had arrived at the mouth of the river.†

The dispatches for General Taylor, being sent through Butler, were carried to Saltillo; from thence, on the evening of their receipt, they were sent by Lieutenant Richey, with an escort of ten dragoons, toward Victoria. But, having passed Monterey, and arrived on the 11th at the small town of Villa Gran, Richey separated himself from

* General Scott to General Butler. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 849.

† Generals Butler and Worth to Scott. Idem, p. 858-861.

his escort and entered the town for the purpose of purchasing provisions. He was lassoed, murdered, his dispatches were seized, and at once transmitted to General Santa Anna.

On the 14th General Taylor received those sent by Matamoras, and, having already ordered forward Twiggs's division in the direction of Tampico, on the 15th and 16th Patterson's division marched for the same place.* General Taylor returned to Monterey with May's squadron of dragoons, Bragg's and Sherman's field batteries, and the Mississippi regiment of volunteers. Victoria was abandoned, and the defensive position which General Taylor had been preparing to occupy since the capture of Monterey was restricted to the line from the mouth of the Rio Grande to Monterey and Saltillo.

To be deprived of so large a number of his troops was a severe blow to General Taylor. Having received no other intimation of the intended action than that contained in the letter of General Scott from New York, and as he was left to defend his position with a force so much inferior to that which he had stated to be in his opinion sufficient for the purpose, he was led to believe that there were motives of a personal nature which had influenced the government and the general-in-chief in making so complete a change in his dispositions. In his reply of the 15th (directed to General Scott in person) to the letters which ordered the withdrawal

* General Taylor to Lieutenant Scott. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 861.

of the troops from his command, he commented bitterly upon the action.

“Had you, general, relieved me at once from the whole command, and assigned me to duty under your order, or allowed me to retire from the field, be assured that no complaint would have been heard from me; but while almost every man of the regular force, and half the volunteers (now in respectable discipline), are withdrawn for distant service, it seems that I am expected, with less than a thousand regulars, and a volunteer force partly of new levies, to hold a defensive line while a large army of twenty thousand men is in my front.”

* * * “I can not misunderstand the object of the arrangements indicated in your letters. I feel that I have lost the confidence of the government, or it would not have suffered me to remain up to this time ignorant of its intentions, with so vitally affecting interests committed to my charge. But, however much I may feel personally mortified and outraged by the course pursued, unprecedented, at least, in our own history, I will carry out in good faith, while I may remain in Mexico, the views of my government, though I may be sacrificed in the effort.”*

General Scott replied on the 26th of January from Brazos Santiago, and in explanation of his measures, and in giving his views of the proper

* General Taylor to General Scott. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 863.

course to be adopted for the defense of the line, wrote as follows :

“ If I had been within easy reach of you at the time I called for troops from your line of operations, I should, as I had previously assured you, have consulted you fully on all points, and probably might have modified my call both as to number and description of the forces to be taken from or to be left with you. As it was, I had to act promptly, and to a considerable extent in the dark. All this, I think, will be apparent to you when you shall review my letters.

“ I hope I have left, or shall leave you, including the new volunteers who will soon be up, a competent force to defend the head of your line (Monterey), and its communications with the depôt in the neighborhood. To enable you to do this more certainly, I must ask you to abandon Saltillo, and to make no detachments, except for reconnaissances and immediate defense, much beyond Monterey. I know this to be the wish of the government, founded on reasons in which I concur ; among them, that the enemy intends to operate against small detachments and posts.”*

This suggestion, to retire from Saltillo and confine the defense to the line from the Rio Grande to Monterey, had been made at the instance of the Secretary of War, who had some anxiety in respect to the state in which the northern line would be

* General Scott to General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 864.

left by the withdrawal of the troops from it, and had written on the 4th of January to General Scott, recommending the subject to his consideration, and that care should be taken to guard against any surprise or disaster in that quarter.* But, having dispatched the letter, from which the above quoted extract is taken, to General Taylor, on the 4th of February General Scott wrote to Mr. Marcy concerning the progress of his preparations, and his views of the course which would be pursued by Santa Anna. These were entirely at variance with the anticipations of the secretary, as is apparent from the course of action recommended for General Taylor.

“It is now believed, on the authority of a letter not official, that my dispatches to the same generals, Taylor and Butler (of the 3d ultimo), being sent off by the latter, at Saltillo, to the former, then marching toward Victoria, by Second Lieutenant Richey, fifth infantry, and ten mounted men, were met by a party of the enemy, and all captured or killed. If Lieutenant Richey (reported as being slain) had not time to destroy the dispatches about his person, which is highly improbable, General Santa Anna, at San Luis de Potosi, had them, no doubt, in four days after their capture. It is consequently more than possible that before this time the greater part of the Mexican army lately assembled at San Luis de Potosi has reached Vera Cruz

* Mr. Marcy to General Scott. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 389, 391, and 872.

or its vicinity. Major-general Taylor's mind has, no doubt, ere this, arrived at the same conclusion, and I shall write to suggest to him, at his own discretion, the advantage of maneuvering offensively in the direction of San Luis de Potosi, after being partially re-enforced with some of the new regiments of volunteers. The suggestion would be unnecessary but for the intimations he has received to stand on the defensive.*

"Another painful rumor, generally credited, reached me yesterday; the capture, at Encarnacion, some sixty miles in advance of Saltillo, of Majors Borland and Gaines, and about eighty men of the Arkansas and Kentucky mounted volunteers. The private letter, from a highly intelligent officer at Saltillo, represents that not a shot was fired by either party."

The future correspondence of General Scott has no important reference to the operations or the state of affairs in the north of Mexico, and, without any further intelligence from General Taylor, on the 15th of February he sailed for Vera Cruz, by way of Tampico and Lobos Island.

When General Taylor arrived at Monterey, he addressed a communication to the adjutant general, in which he complained of the conduct of the War Department in not having at least notified him of the intended changes. The letter, which bore date January 27th, was lengthy, but referred

* General Scott to Mr. Marcy. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 876.

principally to his personal relations. The only paragraph in the whole which spoke of the state of affairs with reference to present security, and which was important, as it expressed his opinion, was that in which he said, "the force with which I am left in this quarter will doubtless enable me to hold the positions now occupied."* Nor was this expression of opinion changed or modified in the subsequent dispatches of General Taylor. On the 30th he received news of the capture of the scouting parties in advance of Saltillo, and even then he experienced no apprehension of serious danger.† But on the 31st he marched for that point with May's squadron of dragoons, Bragg's and Sherman's batteries, and the Mississippi volunteers.

In the sketch of the correspondence, and in the extracts from official letters which have been quoted, are contained the orders and the expressions of then existing opinions of Generals Scott and Taylor with reference to the change in the dispositions of the troops and the withdrawal of the greater force from the north of Mexico. The subject has been much discussed, has been the cause of much personal ill feeling, and the action has received, at least, its due share of public censure. General Taylor's idea that he was about to be sacrificed or compelled to resign has been entertained by many since

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1102.

† Idem. Idem, p. 1106, 1110.

the result of the operation has been made known, and the conduct of General Scott and the War Department has been reprobated without scruple by many persons not very capable of forming an opinion upon the subject, and who, if General Taylor had been sacrificed, would hardly have considered him a needless victim.

The policy of holding a defensive line, by stationing a large force, in detachments, along the Sierra Madre, has been spoken of, and certainly it did not meet the views of the President of the United States. General Taylor considered an advance upon San Luis, through Monterey and Saltillo, nearly, if not quite, impracticable;* and although General Jessup and others had surmised that Santa Anna might be led to believe that an expedition was on foot to attack San Luis from Tampico† (no very great compliment to the Mexican's sagacity), yet two hundred miles of mule paths, impracticable for artillery, prevented such a movement. As movement from Monterey or Tampico was impracticable, or required such immense preparation as to render it inexpedient, and as the alternative proposed by General Taylor, of holding an unproductive country, at great expense, until by some freak the Mexican government should make peace, met with no approbation, it is difficult to see what course could have been adopted, in reason, other

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, October 15, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 351-354.

† General Jessup to the Secretary of War. *Idem*, p. 568.

than to have withdrawn a large portion of the troops, and commenced operations from a new base, whence a practicable route led to the capital of Mexico. As the old line led to nothing, and as active operations might be discontinued upon it, at least for a time, the want of troops induced the necessity of reducing the force upon it to that absolutely required for defense; for, whatever force General Scott might have required in his first operation of establishing the new base, it was certain that the masses could be more advantageously employed in advancing upon the capital by the shorter line than in looking at it from Monterey, Victoria, or Saltillo.

In his anxiety concerning his own expedition, and in his haste, General Scott made an incorrect estimate of General Taylor's strength, and, in numbers and description of force, drew, perhaps, rather more than was prudent; but, whether his action was prudent or not, General Taylor stated a short time subsequently that "the force with which he was left would doubtless enable him to hold the positions then occupied."* If it were sufficient for that end, it was sufficient for all which could have been desired.

It was sufficient for every important object which General Taylor had in view, for every point which he had taken possession of was occupied at the time of his writing the opinion, except Parras and Vic-

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1102.

toria. The alarms about Saltillo had long before caused the evacuation of Parras, and he had acquiesced in the evacuation. And before the receipt of General Scott's order, the "state of supplies"* had compelled him to commence moving his command from Victoria, if that place were of any importance to the American occupation, which is very questionable.

It was sufficient for all which General Scott desired, for the forces in the north of Mexico were in secure position, and as for the diversion on that flank, which he considered of "the greatest importance,"† it followed as a natural consequence of the disposition, as he might have foreseen, though he did not.

Both generals kept their views fixed upon their own positions, with but little reference to the effect of the failure or disasters which might befall the one upon the public service, and neither the one nor the other made his arrangements with any proper anticipation of the movements of the enemy.

"Nothing is of more consequence to a general than the gift of penetrating the designs of his enemies."‡ If either of the American generals possessed this gift, they certainly failed to make any proper use of it at this juncture. General Taylor never had professed to be guided in any great degree by the proposed movements of Mexican com-

* General Taylor to Lieutenant Scott. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 861.

† General Scott to General Taylor. *Idem*, p. 839.

‡ Folard.

manders, and he had paid but little attention to the strength of their armies prior to the capture of Monterey. Information respecting the capacity of the country to support 6000 men or more had been his avowed object in marching upon that town. After he had occupied it, he announced as a principle of his operations, "*that the task of beating the enemy is among the least difficult which we encounter; the great question of supplies necessarily controls all the operations in a country like this,*"* though twenty-four days before he had stated that it was sufficient for his argument in favor of a defensive line "*to know that a heavy force is assembling in our front.*"† With these views, he had taken possession of a poor country, and scattered his troops so as to leave at Saltillo, "the most important point," a force much less than that which remained there even after the withdrawal of the troops by General Scott. And, notwithstanding his subsequent complaints, he expressed the opinion that he could hold the points "at present occupied,"‡ and soon after, in reference to Santa Anna's movement in the direction of Saltillo, that he considered it "improbable."§

General Scott did profess to pay attention to the position and movements of the enemy, and when he learned the disclosure of his intentions to Santa

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, November 8, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 360.

† Idem, October 15, 1846. Idem, p. 351.

‡ Idem, January 27, 1847. Idem, p. 1102.

§ Idem, February 14, 1847. Idem, p. 1113.

Anna, he came to an erroneous conclusion, that the Mexican was going to oppose *him*. Both commanders were wrong; though, entertaining the opinions which they did, if any blame for desiring a larger portion of the army attaches to either, it must in some measure to General Taylor; for he believed 25,000 men to be necessary for an advance on Mexico by way of Vera Cruz;* he knew that Scott had not half that number; and if Santa Anna's advance on Saltillo was improbable, as he said, what use had he for a greater force than was necessary for him to hold the positions at present occupied, other than to guard against a doubtful contingency, while Scott incurred the greater and positive danger?

There were certain facts and circumstances which did control Santa Anna's action, and which might well have been considered by the American generals, although their written conclusions were in no way based upon them. The Mexicans are the most impressionable people in the world, unless their Spanish progenitors may be considered their equals. Certainly, in that national characteristic, there exists a strong resemblance. The morale of the Mexican army was at the lowest degree, and had a corresponding influence on the people. As the first object was to gain confidence, Mexico's first want was a victory. Every thing might be

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, October 15, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 353.

hoped from such an event on the part of Mexico, and all which could be feared was to have been anticipated on the part of the United States. Had the Mexican army once beaten an American army, the result would have been such as followed the battle of Baylen; the only important one where Spaniards were successful in the war with the French in their peninsula, and then only through the surprising errors of the French general. But from that time Spanish energy was aroused.* Spaniards had conquered at Baylen, and that one victory flattered their obstinate pride and induced them to continue the struggle. Their country, mountain and valley, swarmed with guerillas; armies were raised with the most surprising rapidity; and, though beaten again and again, were only dispersed to reappear in stronger force. Baylen was and still is the cry of Spaniards in their remembrance of former and hope of future success.

Such might have been the anticipated effect of a victory of the Mexican general over either Taylor, who had been thus far the terror of Mexico, or Scott, the general-in-chief of the American army. When the immense importance of the victory is considered, it can not be doubted that, when it had once been gained, and the nation fairly aroused by the cheering news, then, and not till then, would geographical points of defense have formed principal topics for the consideration of Santa Anna.

* Napier's *Peninsular War*, chap. viii., book i., p. 77, vol. i., Carey & Hart's edition, 1842.

Had these been remembered by the American commanders, there would have been no difficulty in deciding whether the Mexican president would have marched to Vera Cruz to oppose the landing of a large force, composed in great part of the veterans of the line of the American army, or moved in the direction which he had long observed, especially when the American troops were reduced to one third of their former strength, and the regular force of all arms to less than a thousand men. So long as the prospect of success was brighter in the north than the south, so long was it certain that Santa Anna (unless his genius was underrated) would attack there; and the diversion which General Scott considered of so much importance, was made on General Taylor's part the moment his position offered more probabilities of successful attack than that which Scott was about to take; unless, indeed, it were believed that the Mexican general would refrain from attacking either, in which case it made small difference about the strength of either division.

Had General Scott intended to detain Santa Anna in the north by offensive operations toward San Luis, he should have left with Taylor a force at least as formidable as his own. Had he intended to induce Santa Anna to march from San Luis across a difficult country, and to attack strong positions with a view to his effectual defeat, the dispositions which were made were those best calculated for such an effect, with but few exceptions.

But General Scott intended the former course to be pursued by General Taylor, and made the proper dispositions for the latter, as the result fully proved. The only question of doubt which can arise is as to whether the force which he left with General Taylor was in reason sufficient to enable him to maintain himself. Reference might be made to results; but, as I am speaking of what should and might have been considered, I must refer to facts known to exist at the time when the orders and suggestions for the dispositions were issued.

*“Moral force is to physical force as three to one in war.”** A maxim which has guided the movements of Napoleon and Wellington might well have entered into the calculations of the necessary force for the defense of the northern line in Mexico. The Mexican war had thus far fully exemplified the truth of the maxim, had increased the moral force of American soldiers, and correspondingly decreased that of Mexican generals and troops. Santa Anna's army was known to consist of between 20,000 and 30,000 men; but it was hardly possible that he could bring many more than 20,000 into the field after a long march from San Luis to Saltillo or Monterey.

To oppose this army, General Taylor had some 7500 men of all arms, stretched from Agua Nueva to Matamoras. All the larger positions in the rear were fortified in a manner, and so long as the main

* Napier's Peninsular War, chapter vi., book ix., p. 113, vol. ii., Carey & Hart's edition, 1842.

body of the force was at or in advance of Monterey, "which controlled the great outlet from the interior,"* they were accessible only to corps coming through the Tula pass without artillery, without which Mexican troops were considered "not at all formidable." At Agua Nueva, at Angostura, at the pass of Los Muertes, at the pass of the Rinconada, at the gorge near the Loma de Federacion, and at Monterey, were defensive positions in defiles strong enough to compensate for any ordinary numerical deficiency. But few of them could be turned, and those only by difficult and circuitous movements. With 5000 men at or in advance of Monterey, what more could have been desired to insure the successful defense of the northern line, except say two regiments of the veterans of the army, to give steadiness to the volunteers composing the principal part of the force?

If this view be correct, then, in spite of the partial views of the American generals, confined, as they were, to their own particular operations, and of their erroneous conclusions in regard to Santa Anna's actions, arrived at after a knowledge of his full information of their movements, and still entertained after his advanced corps of cavalry had carried off two parties of American troops, the force of circumstances, and the conduct about which there has been so much complaint, had made the disposition of the American forces nearly that which

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 353.

was most proper and most effective. If there were any thing to regret, it would appear to be that the force of circumstances, or some other agent, had not brought it about sooner. In that case, some three months of inactivity would have been cut off, and any augmentation of Santa Anna's army at San Luis during that period would have been prevented. But, as it was, Scott was on his way to Vera Cruz to open a practicable line of operations, while Taylor held Saltillo, Monterey, and the posts on the Rio Grande, with a force which was, as the result showed, and as he declared in his letter to the adjutant general of January 27th, competent.

As for the belief of General Taylor that he was to be intentionally sacrificed, which he has expressed in various private letters, and which have been set out in the newspapers, it was the same as to believe that the government was about to sacrifice itself by sacrificing him, 7000 men, all the public property on the line, and letting any Mexican force, which must have been large if capable of beating him, without hinderance over the frontiers of Texas into the United States.

That he had lost in a measure "the confidence of his government" is more than probable. Let reference be made to the correspondence of General Taylor with the War Department, and it will be seen that from the very commencement of hostilities to the time when General Scott was ordered to the field, a period of more than five months, not one plan of operations or suggested course of action,

having in direct view the object of the war, had been received from General Taylor, and that all which had been made by the Secretary of War, which were necessarily liable to objections, made as they were at more than a thousand miles from the scene of operations, had been met by statements of difficulties and delays, unaccompanied by any suggestions for overcoming them. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that he should have lost some portion of the confidence which, after his surprising victories of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, may have been reposed in him as a great commander, and that the government, tired of proceeding upon false principles of action, should have done the best it could, by sending General Scott to the field to control the operations as general-in-chief of the army.

CHAPTER IX.

Action of Mexican Authorities—General Santa Anna—His Difficulties—His Policy—Efforts of the Mexican Government to raise Men, Material, and Money—State of Things in the Capital—Scheme of sequestrating Church Property—Opposition of the Clergy—Meeting of Mexican Congress—Election of Santa Anna and Gomez Farias—Consideration of American Proposal to negotiate—Of Scheme of sequestrating Church Property—Is adopted—Fails—Movements of General Santa Anna upon receipt of intercepted American Dispatches—Strength of his Army—Advance to Encarnacion.

THE action of Mexican authorities for a long period subsequent to the fall of Monterey was purely preparatory. On the 8th of October General

Santa Anna arrived at San Luis de Potosi with the troops which had marched from Mexico, and at once set about the task of organizing the large army, of which the levy had been ordered. His great difficulty was in the want of money, but he obviated it temporarily by a forced loan and the pledge of a portion of his private property. His communications to the Mexican government, written while on his way to San Luis and soon after his arrival, all professed a fixed determination to prosecute the war with vigor and energy. In them he congratulated his countrymen on the increase of moral force which the Mexican troops had acquired by their good conduct at Monterey, which had compelled General Taylor to grant such favorable terms of capitulation. But while he did this, he did not lose the opportunity of publishing his own sagacity, and, admitting that the loss of Monterey was a disaster, he regretted that his advice had not been followed by Ampudia, and the place given up without a conflict.* Not without reason did he regret it, and the reasons which induced the advice and for his subsequent course are obvious.

No man knew his own countrymen better than Santa Anna. In his long schooling of military and political intrigue, he had studied them under all circumstances. He knew the capacity of Mexican troops for successful action against their northern adversaries from bitter experience in Texas,

* Official Correspondence of Santa Anna with the Secretary of War and Marine, published in *Diario del Gobeirno*.

and as their moral force had not been increased by the result of the battles on the Rio Grande, it was his policy not to hazard a battle until his numerical strength was sufficient to compensate the deficiency; which was much more evident after the result of the operations of Monterey, his published congratulations to the contrary notwithstanding. With a people of the impressionable character of the Mexicans, a victory was of the highest importance if the war were continued, and it might have been hoped that it would arouse the spirit of the nation to resistance, while at the same time it would increase the power and popularity of the general. In pursuance of this policy, it was useless to attempt any partial operation of defense, and he therefore drew Ampudia's corps from Saltillo to San Luis, which was nearer the center of resources. Upon learning of the contemplated attack upon Tampico, he ordered its evacuation, which was in keeping with his former action. By these movements he had given up the whole country north and east of the Sierra Madre without a struggle. But he had put three hundred miles of comparatively desert country, on the direct route from Saltillo to San Luis, between himself and General Taylor, of which the water tanks could be destroyed to impede the advance of his enemy, and which, for that purpose as well as to secure his own movement, should he choose to make one, were guarded by strong corps of his cavalry. As for Tampico, it was an isolated position, with only

one road to the capital, which led through the Tula pass, which was rocky and difficult in the extreme, and it was of but little importance in the blockaded state of the Gulf coast. Having withdrawn the garrison, he placed strong corps of infantry and cavalry, under Valencia and Urrea, to guard the pass, the advance of the latter general being at its eastern extremity. Santa Anna was then safe from immediate molestation, and could complete the organization of his army at his leisure, and at the same time pay attention to affairs at the capital. The course which he adopted may have been induced by political reasons, but in view of all circumstances it can hardly be doubted that it was wise in a military point of view. Whether Santa Anna designed to control, if possible, the various discordant elements of Mexican action, and direct them in such a manner as to bring about a peace, is a question which he alone possesses the power of answering, and his reputation for veracity, when declaring his motives or intentions, is not so undoubted as to render his explanation, even at this time, reliable.

It has been surmised by some that it was his policy to remain upon the defensive at San Luis, and await the action of the Mexican Congress, which, in the accumulated difficulties to be overcome in the prosecution of the war, might take into consideration the proposals of the American government; while, in order to shield himself from the charges to which the varied speculations of Ameri-

can editors had given rise, of wanting patriotism and of being in league with the American government, he should give his parole support to the war, and with seeming reluctance assent to the measures of Congress, as being those which had been decreed in its wisdom, and with which he had nothing to do but to acquiesce. In support of this surmise there was, his knowledge of American strength, his opposition to proposed schemes for raising money, and his invariable practice of intrigue in every political or military matter in which he was engaged. But if he entertained such views—and he may have done so, notwithstanding his loudly proclaimed desire for war—he neglected nothing by which he might prepare for the alternative.

The exertions of the acting president, Salas, and his cabinet were strenuously put forth for raising men and material of war. Men could be had by forced enlistments. The amount of material, such as it was, which was in the country, was large, and both, being collected with rapidity, were thrown in advance to San Luis. According to Mexican accounts, the force at that point in the month of November numbered 25,000 bayonets and lances, and fifty-two pieces of artillery, with immense stores of ammunition, and 5000 men were on the march thither.

In view of this preparation, many Mexicans indulged the hope of a signal triumph. At that period the advance of the Mexican army was not

contemplated, and it was predicted that at San Luis would be the last great battle, and that it would result in the complete overthrow of the North Americans. But in the midst of all their strength, and in the fullness of their preparations, there were some who feared that the fortunes of war would be against them even there. The officers who had gained experience at Palo Alto, Resaca, and Monterey, had but little confidence, and imparted their spirit in some degree to their comrades. Santa Anna strove to check the spread of the demoralization; and in December, for openly expressing his opinion of the superiority of the American troops, General Requena was disgraced and ordered away from the army.

Notwithstanding the large army which had been collected, the government of Mexico was still embarrassed by the want of money, and to raise it was the greatest difficulty to be overcome. Various shifts were resorted to for the purpose. Calls were made upon different states and upon individuals. The government journals adopted the motto of "*Ser o no ser*," and were filled with articles exhorting Mexicans to give their contributions, in hearty support to the war for the defense of their country's nationality. Some means in money and in kind were contributed, but in comparison with the expenses they were trifling; and while other plans were under consideration, by which the supply could be increased, the political strife between the *Puros* and *Moderados* kept the capital in a state of ferment.

As early as the 14th of October, the insane and inconsistent populace were openly crying for a pronunciamiento, on the ground that Salas wished to perpetuate his power. Successive attempts at insurrection were made, but were quelled by the appearance and protestations of Salas, backed by his adviser and sponsor, Valencia Gomez Farias, the great *Puro* of Mexico.

Among the various projects for raising money, the most popular and apparently the most feasible was the sequestration of the property of the Church for the benefit of the nation and the support of the war. It was not long considered before the clergy became alarmed, and its members used their powerful influence to defeat it. For this action they were accused in the government journals of a want of patriotism, of aiding and abetting the monarchists, and of fomenting the discords which were daily becoming more evident and dangerous; and not without some reason; for, although the Mexican priests entertained no good feeling toward the northern heretics, yet they entertained still less for those who would attempt all which Americans could do, the sequestration of their property, and when the measure was proposed, of course they fomented an opposition. As for the monarchical preferences of the great dignitaries of the Church, they were too well known to admit of a denial.

An attempt was soon made to carry the plan partially into effect. The government required a contribution from the property of the secular and

regular clergy to the amount of two millions of dollars, and issued drafts, in all amounting to that sum, on the different bishops of the country. The prelates were not able to pay immediately, even had they been willing; for, although the Church was possessed of immense estates, yet they afforded no great moneyed revenue in proportion to their value. Their answers, therefore, pleaded their inability and desired delay, and, in the mean while, the mass of the clergy continued exertions for the defeat of the measure in the Congress which was about to assemble.

It met on the 6th of December, and to it were referred the various questions affecting the nation. The great question, of course, was that of the war, and upon it the message of General Salas and the speeches of the ministers all spoke strongly, and all advocated its continuance. Salas was loud in his arguments in favor of its justice, and the absolute necessity of carrying it on. The different ministers all seconded his views, but all agreed that its continuance depended upon the speedy procurement of the money necessary for supplying and paying the army, and all referred to the Minister of Finance. He applauded his colleagues, and agreed with them in their views; but, when he came to dwell upon the state of the treasury, confessed that the nation was utterly bankrupt, and that he was without means of raising a dollar. The matter having been thus placed before the Congress, that body proceeded to the election of a

president and vice-president, and the choice fell upon Santa Anna and Gomez Farias. The management of executive business devolved upon Farias, Santa Anna being allowed, by decree, to remain in command of the army.

The next business before the body was the consideration of the propriety of carrying on the war. The feeling, originally strong in favor of it, had been cherished in the political intrigues of the Santanistas, and any effect which the successes of American arms might have had was completely neutralized.

As, through circumstances, the intended policy of the United States, of placing their troops in a threatening attitude, to operate upon the Congress, had utterly failed, the only thing which was to be feared at the moment of consideration was poverty. The American troops were in detached positions; no preparations were, to the knowledge of the Mexican functionaries, in progress for an attack upon any vital point of the body of their republic, and the American general was at the time engaged in an expedition against an unimportant and undefended town, in order to complete his arrangements for defending a line. Santa Anna's large army occupied San Luis; his cavalry occupied the direct road thence to Saltillo; Valencia's and Urrea's corps, numbering near five thousand men, guarded the Tula pass; and, even if apprehensions then existed of an advance upon the capital by way of Vera Cruz or Alvarado, confident reliance was

placed upon the strength of the fortifications of the ports and of the passes along the road. Moreover, such a contingency was distant, and it was Mexican nature not to provide for it until it arose. California, New Mexico, Nueva Leon, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas had been lost; but they had never afforded many resources to the central government, and it was hoped that the loss would be only temporary, for the Whig party in the United States had come forth in bold opposition to the measures of their government. Its prominent men had denounced the war as unjustifiable and wicked; and although the intention to require territory from Mexico as indemnity for the expenses of the war had not been openly avowed by the administration, yet much opposition had been proclaimed in anticipation of such avowal by the Whigs, and especially by the Abolitionists. The elections in the fall of 1846 had been favorable to the Whig party, and showed that the war was unpopular with a large portion of the American people. All these circumstances were fully known in Mexico, and the results of the elections and the speeches of the prominent opposition leaders were published as incentives to the Mexicans to continue hostilities. It was not considered by their great men preposterous to hope, that when the American Congress elect commenced its functions, all the conquered territory would be returned to them. Under all these considerations, with no immediate danger threatening their capital, the great center of their

resources, and when the surprising avidity with which Mexicans seize upon data which may serve as a foundation for judgments favorable to themselves is remembered, it is not strange that the Mexican Congress should have determined to prosecute the war. Accordingly, it was decreed that no proposition for peace should be entertained until every hostile foot had cleared the Mexican soil, and every vessel of war which lined her coast should be withdrawn.*

Having taken this ground, the next thing to be done was to raise money, and with this in view, the question of the sequestration of the Church property to a large amount was brought before the Congress. It there met powerful opposition, however, as the priesthood had exerted all its influence against it in anticipation. Santa Anna was not in favor of the measure; nevertheless, from time to time, he kept up his importunities for money; and while asserting his patriotism, and his desire of presenting trophies, won from the American army in the struggle for maintaining Mexican independence, to his government, yet he urged the want of funds as his excuse for not moving forward, and asserted the utter impracticability of continuing the war without speedy and efficient assistance from Congress. If it be true that at this period he was at heart in favor of peace, his opposition must have had its origin in a reluctance to have the last impediment to his active advance removed, and

* Diario Oficial del Gobierno, December, 1846.

the fear lest popular opinion should force him to offensive operations before he was fully prepared, and which must indefinitely postpone any negotiation. In his published and official correspondence it does not appear that he strongly expressed a belief that the measure would not answer the purpose proposed, and was therefore impolitic.

But, although not supported by him, and in spite of opposition, the project was taken up on the 7th of January, 1847,* and, after a short but fiery discussion, it became a law by a decided vote. The government was empowered, "in order to raise fifteen millions for the support of the national war against the United States, to hypothecate or sell in mortmain the Church property which might be necessary to obtain that sum." During the debate upon the measure, it was asserted by the functionaries of the administration that the fate of the nation depended upon the prompt action of Congress, and that, if the project were not speedily adopted, the army would at once disband and march to the capital, to light up the blaze of civil war.†

Whether this apprehension was at that particular time well founded was doubted by many, but it was certainly a fact that the army was suffering from the want of money, and the assertion of its contemplated action shows that the measure was favorably looked upon by a large number of the troops. It was, moreover, a powerful argument

* Monitor Republicano, January 9th, 1847.

† Diario Oficial del Gobierno, January 9th, 1847.

in favor of this first blow at the priesthood ; and as the Puros and their leader, Farias, entertained the most determined hostility against that class, the argument was quickly seized and made use of. But, having obtained the power, it was by no means an easy thing to carry the proposed sale into effect. The whole body of the clergy protested against it as sacrilegious, and large masses of the lower class, who, while it had been under consideration, were most clamorous in favor of the measure, supported the protest. Santa Anna gave his consent with great reluctance. In a letter to Rejon, Minister of Relations, he stated that he had uniformly opposed the measure, and now only assented to it on account of the urgent necessities of the country.* The matter was at once discussed in the different states, and but one, and that one Oajaca (in fact, the principality of Don Juan Alvarez), gave, through its government, a decided declaration in its favor.

But, in spite of difficulties, the government appeared determined to carry the measure through, and took the first step by seizing a factious priest, who was stirring up an insurrection in the capital, and casting him into prison. A few more examples stifled the outcry in that city, and the clergy were compelled to work in secret. Few purchasers, however, could be found for the property, even when seized or mortgaged under the law. It consisted almost entirely of real estate, and, where the

* Diario Oficial del Gobierno.

clergy exercised so powerful an influence, it was manifestly unsafe for any capitalist to advance money upon it, much more to purchase it, notwithstanding the repeated concessions of the government. The law authorized the disposal of scrip, secured by the property, at the rate of 77 per cent. cash, no paper or credit being allowed. But the government, being unable to find purchasers, reduced the price, remitting 60 per cent. to them, taking pay at once, one half in paper and one half in specie, and even proposed to make contracts for the sale of the property on more ruinous terms, losing 75 per cent. of the actual value. The attempts at sale were nevertheless fruitless, and no great quantity of money was raised either by the issue of scrip or the sale of the property; and, on account of the immediate failure of the project, and the manifested opposition, the Congress was induced to consider modifications of the law which might render it less obnoxious. But nothing was effected by their deliberations, and the members proposed to break up early in February, leaving the government to obtain resources as best it might.

Santa Anna had, meanwhile, remained in his defensive positions at San Luis de Potosi and Tula, until, by the receipt of the intercepted dispatch of General Scott to General Taylor, he was informed of the plans and movements of the enemy. Victory, which, since the war was to be prosecuted, was the first great want of the Mexican nation, and consequently the great object of his desires, he be-

lieved to be within his grasp; and, contrary to all the anticipations of General Scott, he acted the wiser part, and attempted to seize it in that direction where it was immediately presented. Leaving the castle of San Juan d'Ulloa and the city of Vera Cruz to the care of the government and the exertions of their garrisons, and trusting to the spirit of the nation, which, aroused by his anticipated victory, would induce energy in the prosecution of the war for future defense, he at once directed all his energies upon the task of preparation for an advance. It was one of great difficulty, for he was without money. All the funds which had been raised, and many of his private resources, by which he had supported many expenses, were exhausted, and it was useless to anticipate relief from the government at the capital. In his difficulty, the state government of San Luis de Potosi came to his aid, and its Congress authorized the governor to raise a forced loan on forty-eight hours' notice, the proceeds of which were to be applied to the commissariat of the army.* This loan was in a measure successful, and, being thus relieved, Santa Anna commenced his movement.

Upon the receipt of the information of the designs of General Scott, he had re-enforced General Miñon's corps of cavalry, which was in advance toward Saltillo; and, as the execution of those designs would cause Taylor to evacuate the country about Victoria, he ordered Urrea to proceed with his

* Santa Anna's Official Report of the Battle of Angostura.

cavalry through the Tula pass, and operate upon the line of American communications. With Valencia, who had commanded at Tula, he had had a quarrel, and that officer had temporarily retired from the army. The infantry and artillery of the command, which had been stationed at that point, were withdrawn and incorporated with the main army.

On the 26th of January, 1847, Santa Anna issued his order of march for his whole force, which was stated in the Mexican accounts as follows :

Sappers and artillerists, with 19 guns and 1 howitzer . . .	Men. 650
1st, 3d, 4th, 5th, 10th, and 11th regiments of the line, 1st and 3d light troops	6240
4th light troops, mixed, of Santa Anna; 1st, active, of Celaya, of Guadalajara, of Lagos, of Queretaro, and of Mexico .	3200
General Parrodi's command from Tula	1000
Artillery	250
Mejia's division	4000

Adding to this Miñon's cavalry, about 2000, his whole strength, exclusive of Urrea's command, amounted to 23,340 bayonets and lances, with twenty pieces of artillery.

The artillery moved on the 27th, and was followed by the infantry on the 28th, 29th, and 30th. By easy marches the Mexican army progressed in the direction of Saltillo, and on the 19th of February was concentrated at Encarnacion, a hacienda some sixty miles to the south of Saltillo, and here Santa Anna prepared for battle.

CHAPTER X.

American Force about Saltillo—Capture of Borland's, Gaines's, and Heady's Commands—Arrival of General Taylor—Movement in Advance to Agua Nueva—Reconnaissances to La Hedionda and Encarnacion—Retreat to Buena Vista—Advance of Santa Anna from Encarnacion—Pass of Angostura—Affair of the 22d of February—Movement of Miñon's Cavalry—Saltillo—BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA—Mexican Retreat to Agua Nueva—Communications—Position of Santa Anna—His Retreat toward San Luis—Taylor's Advance to Agua Nueva—Expedition to Encarnacion—Urrea's Operations on American Communications—His Retreat—*Observations.*

FOR some days after the departure of Worth's command, affairs remained quiet about Saltillo. The force there present consisted of Lane's brigade of Indiana troops, M'Kee's regiment of Kentuckians, a battalion of Kentucky horse, and General Wool's original command, diminished by the five companies of dragoons and three companies of the sixth infantry which had marched with Worth for the mouth of the Rio Grande.

General Butler retained his head-quarters at Saltillo. Wool, however, was drawn back from La Encantada to Buena Vista, and, some rumors having arisen that the Mexican army was on the advance from San Luis de Potosi, on the 18th of January he sent Major Borland, with thirty-three men of the Arkansas cavalry, to reconnoiter as far as Encarnacion, where the enemy was reported to be in force.*

* General Wool to Major Bliss, January 27th, 1847. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1106.

Upon arriving at Encarnacion on the 19th, Borland found no enemy. He halted, and sent back to his colonel for a re-enforcement, in order to continue his reconnaissance to Salado; but, having been joined by Major Gaines and Captain Clay, with a party of thirty-five of the Kentucky cavalry, he decided to continue it, without further orders or other re-enforcement, on the next morning.* Having no fear of an enemy, even ordinary precautions to guard against surprise were neglected, and during the night a heavy mist hung over the plain which surrounded the hacienda, completely concealing the movements of any approaching force.

The position of the party had been communicated by inhabitants of the country, or advanced Mexican scouts, to General Miñon, who commanded the advanced corps of Mexican cavalry, and that officer made his arrangements to insure its capture. Making a rapid movement with more than one thousand men from Matehuala, he arrived before day, on the morning of the 20th, at Encarnacion. His force was disposed about the hacienda in such a manner as to intercept every avenue of escape, and, when the morning revealed their situation, the American officers deemed it impracticable to cut their way through. They accordingly surrendered, and the whole number, two majors, two captains,

* General Wool to Major Bliss, January 27th, 1847. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1106.

one subaltern, and sixty-six non-commissioned officers and privates, became prisoners of war without firing a shot. Miñon at once retired with his prisoners in the direction of San Luis de Potosi, and thence they were sent to the city of Mexico.

This Mexican success was soon followed by another. On the morning of the 26th, Captain Heady, of the Kentucky cavalry, who had been sent with seventeen troopers to examine the pass of Palomas Adentro, which entered the valley from the east, some five miles to the north of Saltillo, fell in with a large force of irregular Mexican cavalry, under Lieutenant-colonel Cruz.* He too surrendered without resistance, and his party was likewise sent off to San Luis.

But one man of all those made prisoners returned. Captain Henrie, of Texas, who had accompanied Borland as a volunteer, believed, as he had been a prisoner in Mexican hands during the Texan war and had effected his escape, that he would be put to death upon recognition. He attempted and made good his flight from the guards which surrounded the prisoners. Mounted on a thoroughbred, he broke from their midst, and, notwithstanding the fire which was poured after him, escaped unhurt to the rear. But, keeping to the right of the main road to avoid detached parties, the greater distance and the want of water broke down his

* General Wool to General Taylor, January 29th, 1847. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1107.

mare, and left him on foot many miles from the American advanced pickets at Agua Nueva. Without arms, without food or drink, and in danger of being murdered by the people of the country should he approach their ranchos to obtain them, he nevertheless made his way to the neighborhood of the advanced American positions, and, after three days of suffering, fell in with a reconnoitering party from Agua Nueva.

These were the occurrences which induced General Taylor to change his head-quarters to Saltillo. He arrived there on the 2d of February, and finding every thing quiet in his immediate front, and that Miñon had fallen back to his old position at Matehuala, he still believed that there would be no advance in force, on the part of the enemy, in that direction.* Under this impression, he permitted General Butler to leave the field and return to the United States. But, finding that the confidence of the volunteers had been in some degree affected by the recent captures, and that the inhabitants of Saltillo, in anticipation of an attack by the Mexican army, had in many cases fled from their homes, he determined to leave a select garrison at Saltillo, and to take post with his main force at Agua Nueva, eighteen miles in advance. Accordingly, on the 5th, he moved to that point with the force which had accompanied him from

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, February 4th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1108.

Monterey. He also had military reasons for the measure; for, although he had neither anticipation nor positive information of Santa Anna's intention to advance, he believed it to be the best policy to hold the southern extremity of the defile through the Sierra Madre, rather than the northern at Monterey, as had been recommended by General Scott; for at that point, it was considered, the enemy, should he approach, must fight in the field against strong natural positions, or starve, while, if Monterey were held as the advanced post of the American army, he could establish himself at Saltillo and maneuver at his leisure.* The main force was, therefore, soon after drawn out to Agua Nueva, and encamped near strong defensive positions. There a depôt was established, and filled as rapidly as possible from the rear and the country around Parras. The different volunteer corps of the army were put under instruction, and, in the short time which remained to them, made some improvement in their drill. Although nothing was ascertained by the reconnoitering officers which could corroborate the various flying rumors of the Mexican advance, the troops were kept in constant readiness to meet the enemy. By the 20th of February, however, it was ascertained that Miñón's cavalry had advanced, and was then somewhere to the left of Agua Nueva. This informa-

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, February 7th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1109.

tion, in connection with the various rumors, induced General Taylor to turn his attention to that quarter; for on that flank were roads by which his position at Agua Nueva could be turned, leading from Encarnacion through the rancho of La Hedionda, and to the main road to Saltillo at La Encantada,* and through the pass of Palomas Adentro to the north of the town.

On the 20th he sent a strong party, consisting of a squadron of the first and one of the second dragoons, a section of light artillery, and a corps of volunteer cavalry, making up, in all, a force of over four hundred men, under Lieutenant-colonel May, with orders to reconnoiter the country in that direction, and to ascertain whether the enemy might not be advancing in force by La Hedionda, with a view of striking the main road at La Encantada, or of penetrating by the pass of Palomas Adentro.

On the same day he sent a small party, under Major M'Culloch, a partisan officer of great experience, to the front, to observe the road leading direct from Encarnacion.†

May's command arrived at La Hedionda about three o'clock in the afternoon, and thence small parties were sent out in different directions, to scour the country in its vicinity. Signal fires were soon after lit up on the different neighboring hills, and

* General Taylor's Official Report, March 6th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 132, and Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 12.

† General Taylor's Official Report, March 6th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 132.

far to the east clouds of dust arose, which indicated a movement of troops in that direction. To obtain a better view, Lieutenant Sturgis and an orderly dragoon were sent to the summit of a range of hills which rose to the north of the rancho; but they fell in with a picket of the enemy, by which they were fired upon and captured. The reports of the escopetas, the various signal fires which had been lit up, and the heavy clouds of dust, were conclusive proofs of the vicinity of the enemy; but, as several of his parties had not returned when night came on, May determined to remain in his position. Having made dispositions for defense by barricading the little street of the rancho with cotton bags, he lingered until about ten o'clock, when a man, dressed like a common *peon*, gave him information that Miñon was within a short distance beyond the ridge; that Santa Anna, with 20,000 men, had been at Encarnacion on that morning, and would attack General Taylor on the following day.* By this time all parties had come in but one, and without any delay the signal was given to mount. As the detachment took the road to Agua Nueva, from all the different peaks occupied by Mexican sentinels the signal fires blazed up again to announce the movement. Marching in expectation and in readiness for instant action, the command kept in the saddle throughout the night, and before day-break joined the army at Agua Nueva. The party which had failed to join

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 16.

at La Hedionda came in soon after. The intelligence which the Mexican had communicated at the rancho was soon confirmed.

M'Culloch had left the camp at Agua Nueva with only his second lieutenant, Alston, four privates, and Lieutenant Clark, of the Kentucky troops, who volunteered, at four o'clock in the afternoon. Six miles in advance of Agua Nueva, at the station of a picket guard, he fell in with a Mexican deserter, whom he sent in to General Taylor, and proceeded on. Keeping off the main road, he arrived at midnight in sight of Encarnacion, and, in fact, the enemy was there in large force. After a close reconnoissance, he sent back his whole party except one man, and with him awaited the dawn of day, to ascertain with more accuracy the numbers of the enemy. He passed, by night, inside the Mexican pickets, and, keeping on the side of the mountain to the east, when day broke he finished his daring reconnoissance, made his escape through the lines, and arrived at Agua Nueva during the afternoon of the 21st, without hinderance or disaster.*

Upon the receipt of certain information that Santa Anna was in force at Encarnacion, on the morning of that day General Taylor had determined to fall back at once to the hacienda of Buena Vista; for he feared being turned by his left, and that the enemy might gain his rear at La Encantada if he remained at Agua Nueva, while the strong

* Scouting Expeditions of M'Culloch's Rangers, p. 235.

position in vicinity of Buena Vista could be turned only by the difficult and almost impracticable pass of Palomas Adentro. He had, therefore, on the morning of the 21st, broken up his camp at Agua Nueva, and moved the main body of his force at once to the new position. His depôt of stores was removed as far as practicable during the afternoon and evening. The regiment of Arkansas cavalry was left to protect the trains and the transportation until the last moment, when Colonel Yell had orders to fire the hacienda and all the stores which he was unable to remove. During the night, two companies of dragoons and a battalion of Kentucky horse were sent back from Buena Vista to re-enforce the Arkansas volunteers, which arrived at Agua Nueva near midnight. Soon after, the advanced pickets in the pass were driven in in such haste that they waited not to see whether their enemy, who had approached and delivered a scattering fire, was of horse or foot. The alarm being given, the torch was at once applied to the buildings, the stores, and several large stacks of unthreshed grain, and the whole train of wagons started at once with extreme haste to Buena Vista. The troopers remained until the stores had been consumed, when they also retired, and arrived at dawn of day at the selected field of battle.*

Upon arriving at Encarnacion, Santa Anna had reorganized his army and settled his plan for attack. Believing that General Taylor was at Agua

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 25.

Nueva, he had three roads upon which to operate: the direct route through the defiles, the road to the right by La Hedionda, through Guachuchil to La Encantada, or to the left by the Punta de Santa Elena, through San Juan de la Vaqueria to the same point. Either of the two last turned the position of Agua Nueva, but were considered impracticable, as they would increase the march by two or three days, through a country destitute of provisions and forage, and, to a great degree, of water; wherefore he decided to move by the direct route, and made his arrangements to surprise General Taylor in his position at Agua Nueva. His orders were issued on the 20th for the march to be continued on the following day.

General Ampudia, with four light battalions, was placed in the advance, supported by a battalion of sappers. A company of marksmen and three sixteen pounders, with their ammunition, marched next, followed by General Pacheco's division of the van. Lombardini's division of the center followed, accompanied by five twelve pounders, with their ammunition. Five eight pounders and Ortega's division marched in the rear. Each division of infantry took with it an extra supply of 688,000 rounds of musket ammunition. The cavalry, in escort of the general ammunition train and the baggage of the army, followed in the rear.*

* Mexican General Orders, 20th and 21st of February. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 156.

In this order the Mexican army began its march about noon to traverse the thirty-six miles of desert between Encarnacion and Agua Nueva. Every precaution was taken that the troops should be supplied with water for the long night march, for it was intended to halt during the night in the desert, and to continue the movement without noise, signal, or beat of drum, so as to arrive and fall on General Taylor at Agua Nueva at early dawn on the 22d.*

The whole disposition was deemed by General Santa Anna to be excellent,† but it had one element of failure; it was based on the anticipation of error in the action of his adversary, which can never be relied upon with security. His intentions were, so far as related to his own movements, entirely fulfilled, except in the firing of the advanced skirmishers of Ampudia's corps, which that general excused by stating that he believed the Americans to have mistaken his for Miñon's troops. Upon arriving at Agua Nueva on the morning of the 21st, instead of coming upon Taylor by surprise as he had anticipated, Santa Anna found that place abandoned, and the battle ground changed to an unknown spot. But as he believed that General Taylor's movement from Agua Nueva was a flight from his overwhelming force, and, as he had ordered Miñon to penetrate by a route over the mountains

* Mexican General Orders, 20th and 21st of February. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 156.

† Santa Anna's Official Report of the Battle of Angostura.

or that of Palomas Adentro to the rear of the American position, and occupy the hacienda of Buena Vista, he hoped that his cavalry would arrest the march in retreat, or make such diversion as would allow time for him to come up and fall on with the main body of the Mexican army, and he resolved to proceed.*

Wherefore he ordered the cavalry from rear to front, and, having halted at Agua Nueva only long enough to allow his soldiers time to supply themselves with water, he pushed the whole force forward in pursuit. During the morning of the 22d his cavalry came in sight of Taylor's army, though not in disorderly retreat, as had been anticipated, for it was just then taking up position for battle in the pass of La Angostura.

This position, which General Wool had selected,† and General Taylor had adopted for his battle ground, was indeed of remarkable strength. The whole distance from Saltillo to La Encantada is through a valley ranging from one and a half to four miles in width. On either side rugged mountains, inaccessible for any but light troops, rise from two to three thousand feet, confining operations of masses to the narrow plain. From La Encantada a small stream runs northward toward Saltillo, keeping its course nearest the western side of the valley, but leaving room for wide cultivated fields

* Santa Anna's Official Report of the Battle of Angostura.

† Correspondence. Appendix to Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 176-183.

on the slopes of the mountains. The road runs along its eastern bank, and the ground between it and the eastern barrier is cut up by deep and wide ravines, which set into the high ground, extending from its vicinity toward the steep ascents. At La Angostura, one and a half miles from Buena Vista, and eight from Saltillo, the high lands extend so far toward the rivulet that room is barely left for the passage of the road-way. On the east of the road are high and rugged banks, and on the west is the perpendicular bank of the rivulet. The defile was protected from being turned on the right by a net-work of impassable ravines, which the stream had worn in the soil. These crossed each other in various directions, and south of the defile some hundred yards the system branched, one branch running to the west toward the mountains, while the other continued along the road. As the ravines extended to the mountains on the west, the right was nearly secure (though perhaps it might have been turned near the mountain), and the battle would most probably be fought by an enemy approaching from the south on the left. There the high land, which in a narrow ridge extended to the road, opened into a broad plateau which reached to the mountains. On the southwest the plateau was bounded by a ravine of sufficient width to be called a narrow valley, which reached from the road nearly to the mountains on the east. Toward the mountains this valley ended in narrow and difficult ravines, and beyond it, on the south, an ele-





**BATTLE OF
BUENA VISTA.**

Feb'y 22nd 1847.

Hacienda of San Juan de la Buena Vista.

vated ridge extended from them to the road. On the western side of the plateau toward the road, in front of La Angostura, three barrancas, with steep banks of loose soil and pebbles, cut in, dividing it for nearly half the distance toward the mountains into three narrow ridges salient to the west, the breadth being north and south. Upon its northeastern side it was bounded by a ravine extending from the mountains to the road, and the country still further in rear was cut up by three main ravines, which, with many branches, divided the ground into smaller plains of different capacities. The mountains which bounded it upon the southeast rose abruptly, except in two ridges, which, with a sharp ravine in the angle, united near the summit.

When General Taylor had arrived at Buena Vista, after drawing back his main force from Agua Nueva, he left the troops under Wool's temporary command, and proceeded with an escort to Saltillo to make arrangements for the defense of that place. Before his return on the following morning, the clouds of dust arising from the direction of La Encantada announced the approach of the Mexican army. The long roll sounded at eight o'clock. The American troops, at the encampment at Buena Vista, fell into their ranks with three hearty cheers, and, under Wool's command, marched to the chosen field of battle. It was the birthday of Washington, and the remembrance was not lost upon the soldiers. They were volunteers, most

of them for the first time about to engage in battle; but, for the greater part, they were strong in confidence in their position, strong in their national pride, strong in their personal bravery, and, for the most important point for imperfectly-disciplined troops, strong—they had confidence in their general; for the name of the successful commander of Palo Alto, Resaca, and Monterey was in high repute with Americans and Mexicans, and was in itself a tower of strength.

Upon arriving at the position, Wool posted Washington's battery in the road at La Angostura, with Colonel Hardin's first Illinois regiment in support upon the ridge of high land immediately to its left, and Colonel M'Kee's second Kentucky on an elevation in its rear. On Hardin's left Bissel's second Illinois was formed, and far to the left, under the mountain, Yell's and Marshall's battalions of Arkansas and Kentucky mounted volunteers were stationed in observation. The remaining force, consisting of Lane's Indiana brigade, the Mississippi regiment, two squadrons of dragoons, and six guns of Sherman's and Bragg's batteries, were kept in reserve to the rear of the plateau.*

In this order the advance of the enemy was awaited. Upon finding the American troops in position, his cavalry pulled up and suspended movement until the arrival of the infantry and artillery. During the delay, General Santa Anna sent

* General Wool's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 145.

to General Taylor, who had meanwhile returned from Saltillo, a summons to surrender at discretion, inasmuch as he was surrounded by an army of twenty thousand men, and must, in the event of a battle, be inevitably destroyed;* an act of courtesy which he might very well have dispensed with, had he considered the American character, and especially the stern bravery of the American general. The answer was short, courteous, and a decided negative.

The Mexican main army having arrived, Santa Anna commenced his dispositions for the conflict. His observations had made him acquainted with the impracticable nature of the ground upon his left, and of the unguarded state of the mountains upon the east, and, as the battle must be fought in that direction, he ordered Ampudia to seize and hold the heights with his light division without delay.† Ampudia, who had arrived at one o'clock, soon after marched to the mountains, and commenced the ascent by the southernmost ridge. When this movement had been observed, Colonel Marshall, who was re-enforced by a battalion of Indiana riflemen under Major Gorman, dismounted the rifle companies of his command, and, taking post on the northern ridge of the ascent with them and Gorman's party, prepared to engage the enemy. The lines on either crest gradually approached, as, in

* Taylor's Official Report and Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 97, 98.

† Santa Anna's Official Report.

the endeavor to outflank, the soldiers climbed up toward the angle, and while their efforts were continued for this purpose the Mexican army was taking up position out of range of the American artillery.

Its right, a battery of sixteen pounders, supported by the regiment of engineers, rested on the mountains, whence Pacheco's and Lombardini's divisions stretched in two lines, toward the west, to the road. Two batteries of twelves and eights were posted on the left, and the battalion of Leon occupied an eminence in advance of the main line, directly opposite to La Angostura. The cavalry was stationed in reserve in rear of either flank, and the general baggage train, under the protection of a strong brigade of infantry, was parked far to the south of the field of battle.*

Upon a movement by Santa Anna in observation toward the mountains on the west, Taylor threw two guns of Bragg's battery, supported by the second Kentucky regiment, across the ravine, at a point some distance to his rear, whence they advanced beyond and to the right of La Angostura. To prevent the enemy from coming around by the base of the mountains, and to keep up communication with the skirmishers on the left, General Lane was stationed on the left of the plateau with the second regiment of Indiana troops, and three guns of Washington's battery, under Lieutenant

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

O'Brien. While the troops were in these positions, the Mexicans opened the battle.*

A shell thrown from the Mexican howitzer was the signal, and immediately Ampudia's light troops commenced a heavy fire, in continued rolling volleys, upon the American skirmishers on the opposite ridge of the mountain; but they lay close in the rocks, whence the rattling clang of their rifles announced a resistance less noisy but far more efficient than the stream of shot which was poured from the opposite ridge. In this quarter the engagement continued during the afternoon, each party climbing higher and higher upon their respective ridges, until two lines of skirmishers extended from the base nearly to the summit of the mountain. An occasional shot at long range was thrown from the Mexican batteries, but the Americans upon the plateau awaited the main movements for closer conflict in stern silence, and would not reply. About La Angostura the time had been taken advantage of to strengthen the position. Hardin's regiment had completed a parapet along its front, and an epaulement had been constructed across the road for the protection of Washington's battery. A ditch and parapet on the right, among the ravines, had been made and occupied by the immediate supporting force of the battery, two companies of Illinois infantry, and, with this fortification, the attack of the enemy was anticipated,

* Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 133.

at the position deemed most important, in perfect confidence.

At dark the contest ceased upon the mountain, and the Americans were recalled to the plain for the night.* The Mexicans had succeeded in outflanking them (though the position had not as yet been turned), and held on to the ground which they had gained. In the affairs in that direction, however, but four Americans had been wounded, while many Mexicans had fallen before the practice of the riflemen.

The night passed quietly off about the position of the hostile armies, a few straggling shots between the pickets being all which disturbed the silence.

General Miñon had made good his passage through the defile of Palomas Adentro, and, while the armies were in position about La Angostura, had appeared with his strong brigade of cavalry upon the plains of the valley north of Saltillo. Santa Anna's orders to him at this period were to remain in position, and to fall upon the American forces in their retreat, which he counted upon compelling on the following day.† For this duty also, 1000 mounted rancheros, raised in the country about Parras, had been sent by a mule path from Patos to the village of Capellania, to harass the re-

* Colonel Humphrey Marshall's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 165.

† Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 43.

treat from the opposite flank;* but, if they ever arrived at their destination, they never showed themselves in the operations. Miñon's appearance caused Taylor to feel some anxiety for the security of his depôt at Saltillo, and at evening he proceeded thither, with a squadron of dragoons and the Mississippi regiment, to complete his arrangements for defense, as he was convinced that the battle would not take place before the following morning.†

Saltillo was garrisoned by four companies of Illinois infantry, under Major Warren, who, upon the appearance of the Mexican cavalry, had barricaded the streets, and taken possession of the Cathedral with three companies of his force. A redoubt on the heights south of the town, which commanded several approaches, was garrisoned by the other, and armed with Webster's twenty-four pounder howitzers. General Taylor's train and head-quarters camp was located upon the brow of the hill to the west, guarded by two companies of Mississippi riflemen and a six pounder gun.‡ Having remained during the night at Saltillo, and verified these dispositions for defense, General Taylor returned, on the morning of the 23d, with the body of the force which had accompanied him and a piece of artillery, to the field of Angostura.

Before his arrival General Santa Anna recom-

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

† General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 133.

‡ Idem ibidem.

menced the action. He had re-enforced Ampudia's light division during the night with 2000 men from Pacheco's and Lombardini's corps, and, with that re-enforcement, Ampudia had stretched his right still further, to secure the advantage which he had gained on the preceding evening.* At the first dawn of day his troops renewed their fire; for the American skirmishers, which had been withdrawn during the night, having been re-enforced by a battalion of Illinois troops, under Major Trail, were again ordered into action. Although the enemy showed himself in great force, and occupied many points which the Americans had held on the preceding evening, yet, from the rocks which covered the ridge, they maintained the fight in spite of his numbers and noisy fire. At sunrise the Mexican skirmishers poured down into the ravine from the southern ridge in great strength, with the apparent intention of climbing the opposite steep, and carrying the position by direct assault. They were, however, soon checked, for Lieutenant O'Brien brought forward a twelve pounder howitzer, and, although the distance and elevation were great, he tore up the ravine for much of its length with shrapnel shot, and so effectually that the Mexican fire in the vicinity ceased at once, and their skirmishers clambered up the mountain out of range, amid the continued shouts of the American skirmishers and line.†

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

† Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 51.

While this was transpiring, General Michelto-reña, chief of Santa Anna's staff, succeeded in planting a battery of eight pounders near the base of the mountains, on the ridge south of the plateau, whence a fire was opened upon O'Brien's gun, but at so long a range that it was ineffectual, and no reply was attempted. From the activity apparent in the Mexican positions, it was evident that Santa Anna was making his dispositions to advance, and Wool, therefore, prepared to receive him. Bragg's guns and M'Kee's regiment were allowed to remain on the extreme right. Washington's battery, with Hardin's first Illinois regiment in support, kept the pass of Angostura, and Colonel Lane's third Indiana occupied the high ground in its rear. Bissel's second Illinois regiment occupied the center of the plateau, with a piece of artillery on either flank, opposite to the head of the second ravine, which cut into the high ground from the west. Between this position and La Angostura Steen's squadron of the first dragoons and a company of Texas horse were posted. To the left of the plain General Lane had the second Indiana regiment and O'Brien's guns, and next the mountain, in the broad ravine to the north of the plateau, were portions of the Kentucky and Arkansas cavalry, covered on their left by the skirmishers on the mountain.* By this disposition the mass of force

* Wool's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 146, and Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 53.

was collected about La Angostura, the point of greatest strength, and deemed to be that of greatest importance, while the left, the direction in which the line could be most easily turned, was defended by corps with wide intervals, and three pieces of artillery.

In the morning General Santa Anna observed the position of Bragg's guns and M'Kee's regiment upon the extreme American right, but the same reasons which induced him to attempt to force the passage by his own right induced him to neglect that force, and make his battle entirely toward the east. He therefore brought forward his twelve pounder battery, and planted it on the western extremity of the ridge in front of the plateau, within range of La Angostura, and organized three powerful columns of attack. The first, under his chief engineer, General Mora y Villamil, was made up of the regiment of engineers, the twelfth of the line, the fixed battalion of Mexico, the battalion of Puebla, and the guarda costa of Tampico. The second was to consist of the remainder of Lombardini's and Pacheco's divisions, which were to concentrate on the plateau at the base of the mountain, and move on the American left. It was to effect a junction with the third column, Ampudia's light division, re-enforced as it was, which was to sweep down the mountain, when the whole greater force was to pass on to the American rear. Mora y Villamil and Pacheco each had powerful supporting corps of cavalry, and the infantry force about

the baggage train, under General Ortega, was still in reserve.*

The heavy rolling volleys of Mexican musketry and the sharp crack of American rifles kept up the noise of battle on the left while the troops of the main armies were taking up position. General Mora y Villamil formed his column along the road, in front of Washington's battery, out of range. Pacheco collected his troops in the valley south of the plateau, and halted out of sight, while Lombardini's corps, from the highest part of the ridge beyond it, poured down in splendid array to join him.

The Mexican columns soon advanced, Mora y Villamil's directly upon La Angostura, while Pacheco's commenced the ascent of the plateau at a point near the western extremity of the southernmost ridge. When the advance of this column was discovered, Wool was at La Angostura; but Lane, as had been directed,† ordered forward O'Brien's guns, supported by the second Indiana regiment, to meet and check it. The guns were thrown into battery to fire to the west, upon the southern ridge, near its base, and the infantry displayed on the left and rear. The line, thus disposed, stretched across the ridge and defended the passage, but it presented its flank to the Mexican eight pounder battery. As soon as it was formed, Pacheco's division came over the western

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

† Wool's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 147.

crest in close column of regiments, and its advance opened a fire. It was at once returned with spirit and effect. O'Brien's shot tore through the thick ranks from front to rear, and, although the Mexican masses were crowding up in haste from the valley, the head of the column was checked and thrown repeatedly into confusion. Its advanced corps, the new regiment of Guanajuato, was killed, wounded, or dispersed. The Mexican eight pounder battery, however, had opened fire upon the flank of the Indiana troops. To get beyond its range and to continue to defend the ridge, Lane* intended to advance the line, and O'Brien had already thrown forward his guns fifty yards nearer the Mexican column, when Colonel Bowles gave an order to "cease firing and retreat."† His men, in front of overwhelming odds, much cut up by the fire of the Mexican battery, and badly disciplined, were in this instance but too glad to obey him. They broke, and, in spite of all efforts made by other officers to restrain them, their retreat soon became a rout. The greater number of the men of that regiment fled beyond the range of fire; many continued their flight to Buena Vista, and some even to Saltillo.‡ O'Brien, with his guns, held on to his position for some moments; but the whole fire of the Mexican battery and of the head

* General Lane's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 182-185.

† Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 60.

‡ Wool's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 147.

of Pacheco's column was concentrated upon him, and he was compelled to retire. His horses and cannoneers being much cut up, he was obliged to sacrifice one of his guns, and, upon arriving at the position of the main force at La Angostura, he had not a single man unhurt to serve the two remaining pieces.*

Pacheco's masses, being relieved in front, came over the crest of the plateau and effected a junction with Lombardini's corps, which had advanced unopposed across the head of the valley and ascended near the mountains. The attention of the combined forces was first directed to the American troops upon the plateau, and a heavy fire was opened upon Bissel's second Illinois regiment, and the two pieces of artillery under Lieutenants Thomas and French. Four companies of Arkansas volunteers had been ordered to dismount and move up when the battle commenced, but, upon reaching the plain, they fled at the first fire, and, with few exceptions, those companies were heard of no more during the action.†

When the Indiana regiment fled, Colonel Marshall recalled his dismounted Kentuckians from the slope of the mountain, and advanced his remaining mounted companies of Kentucky and Arkansas troops to cover the retreat.‡. His skirmishers, and

* Captain O'Brien's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 160.

† Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 67.

‡ Colonel Marshall's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 167.

Gorman's and Trail's battalions, fell away from their positions, and retreated along the base of the mountains north of the plateau, and by degrees to the hacienda of Buena Vista, followed by the cavalry of the command, for direct communication with the main American force about La Angostura was cut off. Ampudia's light division pressed on down the slope in pursuit, and the American position was completely turned.

Mora y Villamil's column had meanwhile advanced against La Angostura. As it came within close range, Washington opened his battery with terrific rapidity and effect. His shot tore and crashed through the dense mass of Mexican troops in its entire depth. They advanced but little after the fire had opened, and in a few minutes, the head of the column being completely crushed and shattered, the whole mass heaved in confusion, broke, and the soldiers fled for shelter into the ravines and gorges which set into the plateau, leaving the road encumbered with a multitude of dead and dying.

As this fire opened from La Angostura, Pacheco's troops pressed heavily on the small American force upon the plateau. But the two guns and the second Illinois regiment held their ground with wonderful pertinacity, falling back only as the masses of the enemy extended to the north and threatened to outflank them, and halting and delivering well-directed fires of canister and musketry so soon as the temporary danger had passed.

Upon the flight of the second Indiana regiment, Bragg's guns and M'Kee's regiment had been withdrawn from their position on the extreme right, Sherman's remaining section ordered to advance, and these forces hurried at once to restore the battle on the left. Sherman came first into battery, and Bragg, arriving immediately after, took up the cannonade. Six pieces of light artillery were then in play upon the Mexican troops in flank; for Pacheco's, Lombardini's, and Ampudia's divisions, being joined by a heavy support of cavalry, and giving up the attempt to force the Americans from the plateau, were, as had been ordered by Santa Anna, moving on around the base of the mountain to the American rear. The American artillery soon told, and the column was divided on the plain, many Mexican troops falling back to the valley to the south. Bragg advanced his section to get a closer range, with four companies of Hardin's regiment in support, which had been brought up by the colonel from La Angostura so soon as Mora's column had been repulsed. A mass of Mexican troops were in position close to the mountains, and on it Bragg directed his fire; but, during the previous movements, Santa Anna had posted there a battery of heavy guns, which were unmasked by the supporting cavalry and infantry, and replied with successive discharges of heavy grape. Bragg, unable to oppose the fire with that of his light pieces, withdrew beyond range.*

* Captain Bragg's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress p. 201.

While these affairs were transpiring, General Taylor arrived in the vicinity of the battle field, with May's squadron of dragoons, Pike's of Arkansas cavalry, a piece of artillery under Lieutenant Kilburn of Bragg's battery, and the Mississippi regiment. The general, with the cavalry, proceeded at once to the plateau, leaving the Mississippi regiment at Buena Vista for sufficient time to allow the men to fill their canteens. It was high time for his arrival, for the natural advantages of the position had been in a degree lost, and the result of the battle then depended more than ever upon the hard fighting of the troops. Many officers and men had already fallen, and among them Wool's assistant adjutant general, Captain Lincoln, a gallant gentleman, who was killed while vainly endeavoring to check the fugitives from the field. Of these, a much greater number than was creditable, of both horse and foot volunteers, passed in a stream to the rear.

All the Mexican force which had turned the left was on the advance. Marshall's Kentuckians, Yell's battalions of Arkansas cavalry, and Trail's and Gorman's battalions of rifles, had retreated, and were approaching the hacienda of Buena Vista. The fugitives from the field were flocking thither in great numbers; and although General Wool, Colonel Davis, and many other officers strove to check them, their appeals were unheeded. The enemy's advance of infantry was, in the mean time, coming rapidly on, and but a single ravine intervened be-

tween him and the road. In the crisis of the moment, Davis, who had ridden forward through the fugitives to examine the ground upon which he was to operate, without wasting more time in the attempt to rally them, resolved to attack the enemy in front.* Wool approved of his movement, promised support, and started in person to order forward the third Indiana regiment from La Angostura. Davis, with his own regiment and a few men of the second Indiana who had rallied under Colonel Bowles, moved forward unsupported against the Mexican advance. He deployed out of range, and advanced at double quick time until his troops had gained their distance, when they opened "fire advancing."† The third Indiana regiment had not come up, and the Mexican masses, flanked by cavalry, with portions of Pacheco's and Lombardini's divisions in close support, were moving on; but, without counting the overwhelming odds, the riflemen still kept on their advance. The flanking cavalry of the enemy took cover in a ravine upon the American right, with the apparent intention of endeavoring to gain the rear of the regiment; but, still keeping up their storm of shot, the gallant troops gained the crest of the only ravine which intervened between them and the enemy. The Mexicans halted and replied with heavy rolling volleys of musketry, but the ratio of loss was fearfully against them. In a few moments, the reg-

* Colonel Davis's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 192.

† Idem ibidem.

iment, with a shout which rang high and loud above the roar of battle, plunged into the ravine, and in an instant reappeared in front of the enemy on his own side, and continued to advance.* A closer distance brought greater destruction, but the ratio was yet against the Mexicans. The Mississippians would not yield or halt, and, still advancing, poured in their shot with additional rapidity, until the Mexican advance, cut up and disorganized, lost its formation, and rolled back, a disordered multitude, upon the supporting forces.

The flanking cavalry was in the mean while persisting in the attempt to gain the rear; but when the Mexican infantry gave way, Davis brought up a party to the brink of the ravine, and fell upon the cavalry as it was ascending the bank, killed the commander, and dispersed the command.† Having accomplished this, he retired beyond the ravine which he had crossed, where he was soon after joined by Lane's third Indiana regiment and Kilburn's gun. The last was thrown into battery and served upon the Mexican infantry, then far in the front, near the mountains, which continued its retreat. The two regiments and piece of artillery advanced to the position where the Mississippians had first met the enemy, when a gun from the heavy battery which Santa Anna had established on the plateau opened a fire which drove the In-

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 77.

† Colonel Davis's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 193.

diana regiment, the most exposed, to cover in the ravine, and silenced the American six pounder, which rejoined its battery.*

While a check had been given to the Mexican infantry, the cavalry, with Torrejon's brigade in advance, had skirted the mountains, and, as Marshall's and Yell's commands fell back, approached within striking distance of Buena Vista, where the train of the main army was parked. From his position on the plateau, General Taylor ordered all the cavalry near him to re-enforce the point. The Mexican cavalry was on the advance, when four companies of regular dragoons and two of Arkansas volunteers, all under May, came down to the hacienda; but, seeing the re-enforcement, Torrejon pulled up, and, after a short pause, fell back. May returned to the plateau, and the Arkansas and Kentucky men being left unsupported, Torrejon again advanced, and came down upon them with his whole brigade in column of squadrons. The charge was received by the volunteers in line near the hacienda, and, as the Mexicans approached, they threw in a scattering fire. Before they could drop their carbines and draw their sabers, the mass of the enemy, over one thousand strong, was upon them. The volunteers numbered not more than five hundred. In an instant the *melée* became general, and the whole crowd, in confusion, enveloped in a cloud of dust, drove on with loud

* Colonel Davis's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 193.

shouts toward the hacienda. There a number of men who had fled from the field had taken shelter, and there Trail's and Gorman's battalions had taken post after their retreat from the mountains. They occupied the azoteas of the hacienda, and the adobe walls of its inclosures, whence a rattling fire was directed on the Mexican brigade. As the mass approached it divided, one half following the volunteers into the street of the hacienda, while the other swerved to the right and returned. The Kentuckians and Arkansas troops disentagled themselves, and the Mexicans gave up the pursuit of their advantage, and continued their course through and beyond the buildings; for May's command had been re-sent to support the volunteers with two pieces of artillery, and he was close at hand. Upon his arrival, Lieutenant Reynolds opened his guns upon the retreating parties, and continued his fire until they were under cover and out of range.* In this affair General Torrejon was wounded, and left thirty-five men dead upon the field. On the American side, Colonel Yell, Captain Porter, and Lieutenant Vaughn died in the *melée*, with many of their best and bravest men.

Upon the failure of the attempt upon the hacienda, and the retrograde movement of Davis's and Lane's regiments, a fresh brigade of Mexican cavalry advanced to gain the road along the broad ridge in which the Mississippians had first engaged the enemy. It numbered about one thousand

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 77.

lancers, and protected by infantry in its passage of the different ravines, came on in gallant style. Davis formed his regiment across the ridge, and the third Indiana regiment, with a large portion of the second (which had been rallied by the exertions of Major Dix, Captain Linnard, and other staff officers), stretched to the right and front, closing up the ground between the ravines. Captain Sherman, who had been firing at the enemy's infantry near the mountains, brought up a twelve pound howitzer, and took post on Davis's left. Both flanks of the line rested on the ravines, and it presented a re-entering angle, giving a cross fire to the enemy, who was rapidly approaching. But, although the lancers had started at speed upon the charge, they lacked the moral force with which to continue it. They gradually diminished their pace, and pulled up to a walk within eighty yards of the American line. The commanding officers there, being confident of success in receiving them, had ordered the fire to be withheld, and the troops awaited the word with shouldered arms; but, one or two pieces being fired, the whole line of muskets and rifles was brought down upon the enemy. The aim was settled in a momentary pause, and the next instant the whole head of the Mexican column was destroyed by the well-directed volley.* Captain Sherman commenced firing from his howitzer, and

* General Lane's, Colonel Davis's, and Colonel Lane's Official Reports. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 182, 193, 188.

the mass of cavalry, without any further demonstration of attack, fled from the field.

The affair at the hacienda having been decided by Torrejon's retreat, General Taylor ordered the dragoons, with the volunteer cavalry and Reynolds's section of artillery, to move against the enemy's right flank, near the eastern side of the valley. Bragg, who had heard the uproar at Buena Vista while replenishing his ammunition, had proceeded from the vicinity of the plateau in that direction at a gallop. He arrived after the affair had been decided, and Kilburn having joined him in the meanwhile, he opened his three pieces at long range upon the retreating cavalry, which had advanced against the Mississippi and Indiana troops.* He afterward took post to the left between them and the dragoons, and regulated his movements by those of the enemy, without support, until Wool, at his request, ordered May to move his cavalry to the vicinity. Reynolds had meanwhile worked his guns with rapidity, and, as the commands united, the artillery was advanced with confidence toward the enemy, who was at once driven back against the mountain in the direction of the plateau.

There the battle had raged in a continual cannonade. The American artillery played upon the Mexican troops as they passed and repassed on the east, and although only three pieces (O'Brien's section and Thomas's gun) were in battery at the

* Captain Bragg's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 201.

point, they were served with such skill and rapidity that the passage across the base of the plateau was insecure, in spite of the Mexican eighteen and twenty-four pounders, which were occasionally directed to silence their fire. The American infantry kept in shelter in the ravines, except when a body of Mexican cavalry or infantry would venture within musket range; then a short roll of musketry would vary the cannonade; but the main effort of the Mexican general was at this time on the American left, and his advancing parties on the plateau were easily driven back.

When the American forces on the left advanced and drove the routed masses of the enemy back upon the mountain, his heavy artillery opened upon them from the plateau, but it had little effect. Bragg, Sherman, and Reynolds kept pouring in their well-directed discharges, and Thomas and O'Brien swept the line of retreat. Bragg, still advancing his pieces, obtained a closer range, and also intercepted the route to the Mexican rear. The situation of all the Mexican force which had turned the American left was at this time critical in the extreme. For a time endeavors were made to return the artillery fire with musketry; but, losing courage, the whole body of troops became mingled in utter confusion. Bragg pressed on to within close canister range, and worked his guns with surprising rapidity. The Mexican mass cowered under each stern stroke, as the shot swept through the disordered multitude, and while some vainly

endeavored to escape by climbing up the side of the mountain, the greater portion stood in bewildered confusion, a chaos of men and horses, and every succeeding discharge added fearfully to the number of dead and wounded. In fact, the whole body, of over five thousand men, of different arms, was cut off, and its destruction, which, had not the fire of the artillery been interrupted, was inevitable, would have at once decided the fate of the day. Bragg was following up his advantage, and continued to pour in his canister; but, while his pieces were in full play, a white flag approached from General Taylor's position, passed rapidly in his front toward the enemy, and he ceased.*

At about this period of the action three Mexican officers approached the position of the American troops upon the plateau without a flag, but at speed, and with the evident intention of opening a parley. They were received and conducted to General Taylor, and inquired of him, from General Santa Anna, "what he wanted." The inquiry was received with some surprise, but was replied to by demanding the surrender of the Mexican army, and time was allowed for consideration. Under the idea that the corps on the right would surrender, General Taylor sent a volunteer aid-de-camp in that direction to carry a summons and order a cessation of fire from the American batteries. Upon the arrival of the envoy at the Mex-

* Captain Bragg's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 202.

ican position, the mass closed round him, and he was led blindfolded to Santa Anna. The whole Mexican force which had been compromised moved with him, under protection of the flag, to the secure position south of the plateau.

Whether the scheme had been intended to effect that object is doubtful. Santa Anna makes no mention of the matter in his reports; and it can hardly be believed that a man of his talent for intrigue would have sent so silly and impudent a message, had it originated with him; but certain it is that advantage was taken of the flag to withdraw the compromised troops from their perilous position.

Upon the return of the Mexican officers, General Wool accompanied them in the direction of the heavy battery on the plateau, to communicate with Santa Anna on the part of General Taylor. Although the American batteries had ceased firing, the Mexican had not, but kept playing upon the infantry near the guns under which their troops had just passed without hinderance. Wool, finding that they would not cease their fire, declared the parley at an end, and returned without having seen or communicated with Santa Anna.*

Mr. Crittenden, who had borne General Taylor's message to the Mexican right wing, reached the Mexican general after it had escaped, and received, in answer to his demand, a demand for the sur-

* Wool's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 149.

render of General Taylor. The communications, of course, resulted in nothing, so far as the subject of conversation was concerned, but the whole affair had the effect of allowing, through General Taylor's humanity, the escape of the Mexican right wing, and of annulling the advantages which had been recovered, in some degree, on the part of the Americans. But while the American envoy was blindfolded in his passage to Santa Anna, the Mexican officers had reached General Taylor, who was then on the plateau, with only three regiments of infantry and three guns, and had enjoyed a full opportunity of observing the amount of force which defended the key to the pass of Angostura.

The Mexican force, with the exception of the three heavy guns near the base of the mountain, and their supporting infantry, was, soon after the passage of the flags, clear of the plain. Six American guns, the Mississippi and Indiana regiments, all the cavalry, and the small battalions of riflemen, were then far to the left, where they had forced back the Mexican right wing.

In the interval of American action caused by the passage of the flags, and before the entire Mexican right wing had rejoined the main body, Santa Anna brought up his reserves, re-enforced them by the remnants of Mora y Villamil's column, the eleventh regiment of the line, and the battalion of Leon, all of which he formed in the valley to the south, in column of attack, which, under General Perez, was to make a final struggle for the victory;

for, notwithstanding the successes which he had gained in the early part of the day, and the escape of the right wing, he had been driven, by the hard fighting of the American troops, and the splendid service of their artillery, from many important points, and had only the plateau upon which he could operate. To the strong mass which he had thus formed he added the remnants of his right wing as they came up, and, under General Perez, the whole, in solid column, climbed the ascent from the valley.*

Wool had directed O'Brien to advance his guns against the Mexican troops while in retreat, and his section, with Thomas's six pounder, had been run forward and commenced firing. Colonels M'Kee, Hardin, and Bissel, whose regiments had as yet suffered but little, led them forward in pursuit, and had advanced near to the southern crest as Perez's column of full 12,000 men came over in a blaze of musketry. Surprised by the appearance in such force, and in such good array, of an enemy who had just relinquished the field, and being somewhat scattered, one regiment in line,† another deploying from column of divisions,‡ another in column of companies, and in advance of and without the assistance of the artillery, the American infantry delivered a fire, and the greater portion sought shelter in the center barranca of the western side

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

† Lieutenant-colonel Weatherford's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 174.

‡ Colonel Bissel's and Major Fry's Reports. *Idem*, p. 176, 170.

of the plateau. Some continued firing from its crests, but they did not retard the advance of the Mexican column. All which opposed that was the rapid and continued discharges of artillery with which O'Brien and Thomas tore its ranks; but, although they swept through the column with terrific effect, and masses went down at every round, yet the range became palpably shorter each instant. Canister was substituted for round shot; but still, although momentarily checked, the mass came on, and before it O'Brien and Thomas retreated by the recoil of their pieces. At that time not an efficient infantry soldier was in the plain.

The volunteer regiments, mixed in confusion, were crowded in the deep barranca, and rolled down its steep and shelving banks to the bottom, while the Mexican infantry enveloped its crest and pelted them with musketry, to which they had no chance to reply.* To insure their destruction, a strong battalion of lancers, from the cavalry reserves along the road, came over the salient crest of the southern ridge, and, passing the second, were about to close the mouth of the barranca, the only avenue of escape which was left. Under the fearful storm of shot, Colonels M'Kee and Hardin, Lieutenant-colonel Clay, and numbers, brave and gallant men, of inferior rank, were slain and wounded, and all appeared to be lost, when the movement of the lancers brought them in range of Washington's battery at La Angostura. He open-

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 110.

ed his guns at once with accuracy and effect, cutting up and driving back the horsemen from the mouth of the barranca, through which the volunteers issued in a stream, and fled for shelter toward the battery, while Washington and his subalterns, Brent and Whiting, kept the guns in play, over their heads, upon the retreating cavalry. The Mexican infantry, being unopposed, descended into the barranca, and murdered every wounded man who had been unable to escape.*

On the plateau affairs were at the crisis. After the escape of the Mexican right wing, Bragg, being fearful that the enemy would concentrate his force and attack on the American right, had started with all speed in that direction.† When the struggle there had fairly commenced, officers were sent to hasten forward Sherman's battery, the dragoons, and the Mississippi and Indiana regiments. The heavy fire about the position soon told of the necessity of their presence, and Bragg and Sherman urged on their jaded horses with whip and spur. Davis and Lane led their regiments at a run across the ravines and ridges; and Bragg, in advance, gained the plateau just as the Mexican masses had closed upon and captured O'Brien's guns; not, however, until that officer and all his cannoneers had been wounded. Bragg threw his three pieces at once into battery, and, with Thom-

* Carleton's History of the Battle of Buena Vista, p. 111.

† Bragg's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 202.

as's, they were worked with all the energy which the crisis demanded. The first discharge caused the advancing multitude to waver, the second threw it into confusion, and the third insured its retreat; for Sherman had come up and taken up the fire, Washington at that instant opened upon the lancers, Davis and Lane had approached and opened fire upon the Mexican right flank, and the battle was won.

The artillery was advanced in pursuit, with Davis's regiment in support, and kept up a fire on the retreating masses until it came within range of the heavy guns of the enemy, when it fell back again to the north of the plateau. The after efforts of the Mexican troops were confined to an attempt to remove a disabled caisson, which had been left in the advance; but they were driven from its vicinity with loss. The stream of their fugitives had borne with them O'Brien's two guns, and no attempt was made on the part of the Americans to recover them.

When night fell, the noise of battle, which had died away since the repulse of the Mexican reserves, ceased entirely, and both armies occupied, in the main, the same positions whence they had moved in the morning.

When the battle had commenced at Angostura, General Miñon moved his cavalry from the valley north of Saltillo, along the eastern base of the

mountains, with the apparent intention of cutting the communication of the main body of the American army with Saltillo. A few shells were directed upon his column from the redoubt south of the town; but the range was too great for effect, and the cavalry gained the plain without loss. There it intercepted and took prisoners a few fugitives from the field; but, while it remained in position, Captain Shover brought forward his gun from General Taylor's camp, followed by a promiscuous crowd of about one hundred mounted and foot volunteers, teamsters, citizens, and servants, all shouting to the top of their bent, but of no other use than to make a show of a supporting force. Shover, keeping in advance of this crew, opened his gun upon the cavalry, which fell back before his well-directed fire. Miñon had, however, left a strong corps in ambush in a ravine, whence it could charge upon the gun if it were advanced to annoy the retreat. Shover observed a single horseman who watched his movements, and, reconnoitering in person, he discovered the position of the detachment;* wherefore, neglecting the main body, he brought up his piece to an enfilading position, and raked the ravine with a single shot at long range, which drove the detachment out, and it hastened to join the retreat. Captain Webster had sent a twenty-four pounder howitzer from the redoubt, with a company of infantry in support, which Lieu-

* Captain Shover's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 208.

tenant Donaldson brought up at the moment, and, both pieces being advanced, cannonaded the cavalry until it reached a position out of range, north of Saltillo; and, the communication being thus cleared to the city, no further attempts were made by the enemy to interrupt it.

During the night, every preparation was made on the American side to receive a renewed attack on the following morning. The front was covered by a strong chain of sentinels, and strong pickets were posted to the right and left to guard against being turned during the darkness. The troops were supplied with rations on the field, and the wounded were sent in wagons to Saltillo.

The remnant of those companies of the Mississippi regiment which had been engaged were sent to garrison the town, and were replaced by the fresh companies of Illinois and Mississippi troops which had held it during the battle.

In the uncertainty of Santa Anna's advance and of his field of battle, General Taylor had stationed General Marshall, with a battalion of Kentucky horse, and Captain Prentiss's heavy battery of two twenty-four pounders and two eight-inch howitzers, at the pass of La Rinconada. On the night of the 22d, he sent orders to Marshall to move up to Buena Vista. Marshall started so soon as he received the order, and by strenuous exertions and perseverance, brought his command, with all the mate-

rial, to within striking distance of Buena Vista on the night of the 23d, through the country which was at the time occupied by the thousand mounted rancheros on the right, and Miñon's cavalry brigade on the left. With this re-enforcement, and the fresh companies from Saltillo, General Taylor was enabled to present on the field of battle a force in numbers slightly superior to that with which the action had been opened on the 22d, and with one piece of artillery more,* besides having the advantages of the superior weight of metal for a battery in fixed position.

When daylight broke on the morning of the 24th the preparations had not been completed, but the position which the Mexican army had occupied on the previous day was clear of an enemy. Santa Anna had fallen back during the night to Agua Nueva, leaving his dead unburied and his wounded uncared for. In all, these amounted in number to over two thousand, including several officers of high rank.

The American scouts were pushed on after him to observe his movements, and by seven o'clock returned with positive information of his retreat. Upon receiving it, Taylor, with Wool and the staff, moved up to La Encantada with an escort of dragoons. Thence he dispatched his assistant adjutant general, Major Bliss, to Agua Nueva, with a proposition to Santa Anna for an exchange of pris-

* General Taylor's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 137.

oners, a request that he would send in for his wounded, and a conciliatory message, expressing the desire of the American government for peace. The exchange of prisoners was effected, and the release of the prisoners taken at Encarnacion and the Palomas pass was agreed upon. As the Mexican general had no means of transporting his wounded, he left them in the hands of General Taylor, to be treated as humanity might dictate. But he was just then in no humor to assent to the indirect proposals for peace which were contained in the message of the American commander, and his reply expressed a determination to prosecute the war, and to say nothing of peace so long as the Americans were west of the Rio Bravo, or occupied any part of the Mexican territory, or continued to blockade the ports of the republic.*

Santa Anna was in a position of great difficulty. His attempt to force the pass of Angostura, in spite of all his arrangements and of his overwhelming numbers, had proved a total failure, however much he may have tried to disguise the fact to his countrymen and even to himself.

With his army beaten, weakened by over two thousand killed and wounded, and by more than three thousand desertions, he was in position without hospitals, without depôts, and without money, and, worse than all, a revolution was springing up in the capital of Mexico. He had still eighteen thousand men left; and when his energy is con-

* Santa Anna's Official Report.

sidered, as displayed in the rapidity with which he attempted to seize the advantages promised by Taylor's weakness about Saltillo, it may be deemed strange that, in the situation in which he found himself, he did not make another effort to gain what might be called, with more reason, a victory. But, with all his energy and talent, Santa Anna had not that steady, stern perseverance which, in a general, often repairs his faults and makes amends for a host of errors. And, indeed, if he had failed in carrying his point with his whole force, even when his troops were inspired by his partial success, when the advantages of position had been in great measure taken from Taylor, when the contest depended upon the bravery and hard fighting of the troops alone, and the American soldiers, although in numbers but one to three and four, had wrested from him point after point, and when the American artillery, with a few steadfast regiments, had met the advance of his overwhelming masses in the last effort for victory, and driven them, discomfited and broken, from the plateau, it might well have been considered doubtful whether success could be gained by a further continuation of the struggle.

He was in a region of country where he could not easily obtain supplies without interruption from the enemy, and this, his alleged reason for his indecision, operated to induce his retreat; wherefore, on the 25th, he called a council of war, only necessary when a general wishes an excuse for such a

movement. All of his general officers coincided with him in opinion, and on the 26th he commenced his retreat toward San Luis, with a view of occupying the first peopled localities on the route. Miñon, who had returned through the pass of Palomas Adentro, had joined the main army, and was directed to follow as the rear guard.

On the 27th, General Taylor moved his force again in advance to Agua Nueva. The road from Buena Vista to that point was strewn with dead and dying Mexicans, and numerous wounded were found in the ruins of the hacienda. These, as well as those left upon the battle field, were transported to Saltillo and treated by American surgeons.

Nothing prevented General Taylor from beating up Santa Anna's head-quarters on the morning of the 27th but the jaded state of the dragoon horses, and the want of water on the route. But, having cared for the wounded, on the 1st of March he dispatched Colonel Belknap, with all the cavalry, two pieces of artillery, and a regiment of infantry, in wagons, to Encarnacion, for the purpose of cutting up the Mexican rear guard, reported as being still at that point. The command left Agua Nueva at three o'clock in the afternoon, and made the distance in the night. The same appearances of hurried and disordered retreat were visible which had been met with on the route to Agua Nueva. Multitudes of dead and dying, from wounds, fatigue, and hunger, encumbered the road; and, upon arriving at Encarnacion, that hacienda was found

unoccupied, except by a small party of the enemy, and 220 wounded men in an almost utter state of destitution. The party of Mexican cavalry endeavored to escape, but were all captured and made prisoners. Belknap returned to Agua Nueva on the afternoon of the 2d; and, having informed General Taylor of the state of the Mexican wounded, with characteristic humanity, he sent thither a quantity of provision, and caused such as could be transported to be moved to Saltillo.

In the battle of Buena Vista the American force upon the field numbered 4425 bayonets and sabers, exclusive of officers, and fifteen light field guns. In the achievement of the victory and the effects which have been narrated, the loss was 267 killed, 456 wounded, 23 missing, and three guns captured.*

During the continuance of the operations of the main armies about Saltillo, Generals Urrea and Romero, with their corps of cavalry, had reached the American line of communications through the Tula pass, Victoria, and Montemorelos. The road between Monterey and Camargo had been guarded by a regiment of Ohio volunteers, of which one detachment, under the lieutenant colonel, was at Marin, the colonel, with the head-quarters, at Serralvo, and a third detachment, under the major, at Punttiaguda. When General Taylor had become

* General Taylor's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 137.

satisfied of Santa Anna's approach on the 21st, he had sent orders for the regiment to concentrate, and move with all speed to Monterey. These orders were received on the 23d at Serralvo, and Colonel Morgan, having brought up his detachment from Puntiaaguda during the night, and destroyed the stores which he was unable to transport, marched on the morning of the 24th.

On that day Urrea made his appearance near Ramos, and cut up an upward-bound train, killed some forty or fifty wagoners, captured the weak escort, and in the afternoon appeared before Marin, where his troops skirmished with the American garrison.

A detachment from Monterey having arrived and re-enforced the garrison, Lieutenant-colonel Irvin abandoned Marin, and marched on the 25th, without further communication with Morgan, who arrived the same afternoon, and quartered for the night in the town. Irvin continued his march without interruption, but on the following morning Morgan fell in with Urrea at Agua Frio. A continual skirmish ensued for some miles along the road, as far as San Francisco. The Mexican cavalry hovered about the column, threatening an attack for the whole distance. To oppose it, Morgan disposed his troops in square, with his wagons in the center, and in this order, without a close encounter with the enemy, he reached San Francisco. From that point he sent forward an officer to communicate with Irvin, who was by this time near

Monterey. Irvin returned with two field pieces, which, when he came in sight of the enemy, then in advance of Morgan's position, were at once opened, and the Mexican cavalry fell back immediately to the rear. Immediately after, a heavy fire of escopetas was opened upon Morgan's command, which killed one captain and four soldiers and wagoners. Irvin's troops were then moved to the right, and, from a general discharge from the whole force, Urrea fled. The column continued its march to Monterey without molestation.

On the 7th of March Urrea was at Serralvo, and near that place fell upon an empty train of one hundred and fifty wagons, which had been sent to the rear immediately after the battle of Buena Vista, under the escort of six companies of infantry and two guns, commanded by Major Giddings. Urrea's force at once attacked it, killed two privates, cut the train, burned forty wagons, killed fifteen teamsters, and, having surrounded the rear guard some two miles from the advance, he summoned it to surrender; but the captain in command was, singularly enough, allowed an hour to communicate with his chief in the advance. The reply was, of course, a refusal, and immediately after it had been dispatched a re-enforcement was sent to the rear. The Mexicans gave up the attempt to consummate their success and enforce the summons. The whole command, with the remaining wagons, was concentrated in the advance, and on the following morning entered Serralvo without

opposition. There it met an advancing convoy, from which it was supplied with ammunition, and proceeded on to Camargo.

Urrea then turned his attention to the advancing train under escort of Colonel Curtis's regiment of Ohio volunteers; but, in the mean while, General Taylor had leisure to clear his communications.

He marched, with a force of cavalry and light artillery, from Saltillo on the 8th. On the 15th he sent Colonel Marshall, with the Kentucky cavalry and a piece of light artillery, on the road to Marin, to search for the enemy; but, hearing of Urrea in the vicinity of Marin, near Curtis's convoy, he joined Marshall with his escort, and, as Urrea fell back before his advance, effected a junction with Curtis, who was sent to Monterey. Taylor, with the cavalry and artillery, pushed on after the enemy, who fled before him to Montemorelos, and thence to Victoria, through the pass of Tula, and out of the valley of the Rio Grande. Taylor, not having a sufficient cavalry force to pursue him, returned to Monterey.*

Communications being thus re-established, operations upon the northern line were thenceforth confined to simple occupation, and active war in that quarter was at an end.

* Reports of Colonel Morgan, Major Shepherd, and Major Giddings. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 210-217, and Correspondence of General Taylor with the Adjutant General. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1123.

The want of communication with General Taylor during the operations about Saltillo, and the knowledge that General Urrea was in force upon the line of communications, induced a state of alarm at all the posts on the Rio Grande from the time of the first rumor of Santa Anna's advance until the receipt of the intelligence of the battle of Buena Vista. In consequence, rumors of the complete destruction of Taylor's corps, and the reconquest of the valley of the Rio Grande by the Mexican troops, were transmitted to the United States; and the excitement and anxiety there were by no means allayed by the requisition of a volunteer colonel who commanded at Camargo, for 50,000 men to be sent instantly to the country which had just been abandoned as the seat of active operations. The effect of all this anxiety was to increase the appreciation of the battle of Buena Vista, and to give it, in the estimation of the public, the first place in the record of achievements of American arms. And truly it was a glorious achievement.

In one month Santa Anna had made his march from San Luis to Angostura; had fought the battle which it had been hoped would arouse the national spirit of Mexico to continued and energetic resistance in deeds as well as in words. At the end of the month he was in retreat, with his army beaten, cut up, and dispirited, and with the trophies of three guns and two company markers to show as the fruits of the victory, for the achievement of

which he had made such preparations. And this was the result of a battle fought by an army of over 20,000 Mexicans, of whom one half, at least, were counted as the veteran soldiers of their republic, against one of less than 5000 Americans, the greater number of whom were badly disciplined and had no experience in war.

The effect of the victory was to prevent an increase of moral power on the Mexican side, to force Santa Anna to organize, in a great measure, an entirely new army for future operations, to secure possession of the north of Mexico and safety for the American frontier, and to afford time for the advance of the main operations of the war by the southern line from Vera Cruz.

These results could hardly have been more favorable to the American cause had the operations been planned and executed in accordance with the views of the most enlightened military chieftain, having for his object the furtherance of the operations of the war, to the end set forth as that most anxiously desired, "*the conquest of peace.*" And yet the battle took place, as has been seen, contrary to the anticipations and judgment of both General Taylor and General Scott. As it did occur, and was a successful action, attended with great results, it increased the reputation of the former, and as it was undoubtedly a dangerous and hard-contested one, his friends and himself have continued their complaints of the action of the latter and the War Department for placing him in a position where he

gained the glory of the battle, regardless of his own expressed coincident opinions as to the probability of an attack in that direction. And in judging of the military acts of General Taylor in these operations, those expressed opinions should be remembered, although, nevertheless, he did display all those sterling qualities of a commander which have established his popularity, and caused his errors of judgment and inefficient policy to be overlooked.

“To be ready at a moment to devote himself, if necessary, for the welfare of the state,”* is enumerated by a great military writer as among the qualities which acquire for a general distinction and renown. It is a quality of the heart rather than the head, it is true, but in the demonstration of devoted patriotism lies the surest road to popular affection; and the rare quality appears in General Taylor’s reply to General Scott of January 15th, in which he says, “*I will carry out in good faith, while I remain in Mexico, the views of the government, though I may be sacrificed in the effort.*” His erroneous impression that he was to be sacrificed, and his conclusions with regard to Santa Anna’s action, do not affect the merit of his patriotic intentions and devotion. Had General Scott, in his answer, treated the subject as one affecting the interests of the service rather than as a division of troops between two commanders for personal advantages in their positions, in which light, it appears from their correspondence, both of

* Montecuculli.

the generals regarded the resources of their country, which were the bone of contention, the question of the desire of sacrificing General Taylor, on the part of the government or of General Scott, would hardly have arisen. He and his friends would have been forced to have considered any error, if error there were, one of head rather than of heart, especially as General Taylor's anticipations of Mexican action were the same as General Scott's. All the bad feeling and discussion of the subject might have been saved, though probably General Taylor would not have received so much applause as he has, since it has been made to appear that he was the object of persecution.

In moving in advance to Agua Nueva, after he had found that the moral force of the volunteers of his command had been somewhat impaired by the capture of the scouting parties, General Taylor acted the part of a great commander, having in view the restoration of confidence; but he entailed upon himself the necessity of fighting at the southern extremity of the pass, which, inasmuch as he believed an advance of the main Mexican army toward him to be "improbable," he was not at the time prepared for. Believing, as he did, that "it was not likely that a serious demonstration would be made in that direction,"* it was easy to speculate on the advantages of his position at the

* General Taylor to the Adjutant General, February 7th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1110.

southern extremity of the pass. There were advantages, as he stated, and, inasmuch as the position was strong, the victory, if the battle ensued, was, in fact, comparatively secure. As it was the boldest, there is no doubt that offering battle to Santa Anna at that extremity was the proper course of action. But it certainly would not have been had the danger been so great as has since been represented, for General Taylor was obliged by neither his instructions nor immediate necessities to take up the position, and, saving the moral effect a retreat would have had upon his soldiers, the result of the operation would have been the same upon the general progress of the war had he immediately withdrawn his stores and troops from Saltillo to Monterey. The morale of his volunteers might have been in a degree restored when they found themselves in greater strength nearer the base of operations, and behind fortifications. At Monterey General Taylor could have withstood Santa Anna's attack with an increased force of two regiments, fixed artillery, and ammunition in abundance, and with provisions for some months. His objections to falling back to that place he has said to be, that he could not forage his cavalry and light artillery.* If he were to stand a siege he wanted but a small force of either, and the greater portion might in safety have been sent to re-enforce the posts on the lower Rio Grande, and join a relieving army. The physical effect of detaining

* General Taylor's Speech at Pass Christian.

Santa Anna in the north would have been accomplished, unless he refused to proceed to Monterey, and retraced his steps to quell the revolution in the capital, in which case General Taylor would have failed to acquire the glory of victory, but would have saved his troops. If Santa Anna besieged him, he certainly could have held out, and the Mexican would hardly have attempted to turn him in force and proceed to the lower Rio Grande, leaving five thousand enemies in his rear. Had he left a portion of his army to blockade the Americans, Taylor could have fought the blockading division with more certainty of success than, as it appears from his own statements, he fought the battle of Buena Vista; and, the blockading force being beaten, the Mexican army would have been cut up in detail. In any event, the operations in the north would have been continued for some months—certainly, if Santa Anna hoped to achieve any thing, until the 18th of April, for even General Taylor would hardly admit that Santa Anna could have captured him by that time; and, in the meanwhile, the road to Mexico from Vera Cruz would have been open to General Scott.

But when General Taylor first became positively informed of Santa Anna's advance on the 21st, then, indeed, had he retired, he would have made a hurried retreat, which would have had a most pernicious effect upon his volunteer troops. Although, by falling back to La Angostura, he gave up the advantages of making the enemy fight in the desert,

while he held a strong position in front of the first supply of water, and also permitted Santa Anna, if he chose to run the risk, to halt at Agua Nueva and replenish his supplies from the country about Parras, then sixty miles to his left, yet the pass opposite the defile at La Angostura was but a mile and a half wide, the position was strong, he had 4500 troops and fifteen light guns, and, inasmuch as there was a possibility of being turned at Agua Nueva by the roads through La Hedionda and La Punta de Santa Elena, the victory was comparatively secure even then, with good dispositions upon the battle field. Nevertheless, as appears from a letter from General Taylor, written on the night before the battle, which his friends have published, it was a subject of great anxiety on his part at the time, and it was not until then that he made up his mind to make his last stand at La Angostura, which, it is true, he then did with all the determination which characterized his greater actions. It was not until that time that he ordered up Marshall, with the heavy guns and the battalion of horse, from the pass of the Rinconada, where they were useless. Then it was a matter of great hazard to bring them through the valley, for Miñon in force had already taken position to the north of Saltillo. By leaving that force at such a point, when it might as well have been at Buena Vista on the 22d as on the 24th, General Taylor neglected an evident principle of war: "*When you have resolved to fight a battle, collect*

your whole force. Dispense with nothing. A single battalion sometimes decides the day."* By that neglect he was deprived of four heavy guns during the action, which, without consideration of the superior weight of metal, would have guarded the defile at La Angostura, and afforded four light pieces more for the general battle. Four pieces on the plateau (Bragg's and Thomas's) held the whole mass of the Mexican attacking column in check, and "saved the day." Had four more been on the plateau at the commencement of the action, there would have been nine pieces in play, leaving Bragg with two on the right, and Sherman with two in reserve. In that case, it is difficult to see, since four pieces drove back the most desperate attack, how the Mexican troops could have gained their first advantages; no loss of magnitude would then have occurred, as there did toward the close of the action in retrieving the battle.

General Taylor was absent when the dispositions for battle were first made by General Wool on the 22d. But, if he had determined to fight in advance of Saltillo, his arrangements for the defense of that point might have been earlier made; and, in any case, as it certainly was the point of least importance, so long as he blocked the passage of the main Mexican army at La Angostura, it would appear that he might have sent his directions for the dispositions by staff officers. But he approved of General Wool's dispositions, and these may be the subject of remark.

* Napoleon.

As they were first made, the heights on the left were unoccupied, inviting Santa Anna's movement to the direction in which the position could be most easily turned. If the heights were of any consequence, it would appear that they should have been occupied in advance of the enemy; and that they were considered so, is evident from the opposition which was made to Ampudia's movement by the American skirmishers. But why the positions which they occupied were given up during the night, if they had been worth fighting for, and the attempt was made to recover them on the following morning, is a question.

General Taylor was again absent at Saltillo when the battle recommenced on the 23d, and the dispositions were again made by General Wool, but probably with his knowledge and approbation. In these, the key of the position was considered to be "the eminence immediately on the left of Washington's battery"* at La Angostura, and the greater portion of the force was concentrated about it, notwithstanding the enemy evidently showed an intention to turn the left in order to get possession of it.

Now the eminence immediately to the left of Washington's battery would most certainly, in possession of the enemy, have given him the victory and "a free passage to Saltillo." But, before he could get it, he had either to force the pass of An-

* Wool's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 146.

gostura, or sweep the American troops from the plateau. The possession of the pass without the plateau would have availed him nothing, for if he endeavored to penetrate it he would have exposed his flank ; and, moreover, to attempt to force it directly in the face of four pieces of modern artillery, served by such gunners as those of the American army, with the protection of a parapet, was useless, as the event soon proved to the Mexican general. But two full regiments, which did not fire a shot in defense of the pass when Mora y Villamil's column was repulsed, were stationed about it, while, to oppose the advance of the main Mexican army, at a point where the American troops were without protection, a single regiment of undisciplined troops and three guns were thrown, unsupported, far to the front, and, as if that was not sufficient, were disposed so as to present the left flank to the Mexican batteries. Under such circumstances, it could hardly be expected of volunteer troops, in their first fight, to stand.

That they did maintain their position when, as was afterward proven, they had but little instruction or discipline, speaks much for the personal bravery of the men. Had the troops been properly disposed and the fight been well supported there, the testimony of Mexican engineers would show that the victory would have been early won, so great was the execution of the light artillery which the second Indiana regiment supported.*

* "About 3000 infantry and a supporting force of cavalry, under General

When it fled, the flight of the skirmishers on the mountain was a matter of consequence, and, as the Mexicans had a footing in force on the plain whence they could operate directly against the "key of the position," so called, "the eminence immediately to the left of Washington's battery," the advantages of position were in a great degree neutralized, especially after the Mexican general had brought up his artillery. But that the whole plateau was not swept immediately after the flight of the Indians, and that the masses of the enemy were delayed by the steady front of the second Illinois regiment, and the fire of two guns until re-enforcement arrived, speaks volumes for the bravery of American soldiers, and for the splendid efficiency of their artillery. From the moment the Mexicans gained the plateau, the battle was between the soldiers as well as the generals; and the great quality of a soldier, and perhaps the only one which is indispensable to a general after the commencement of a battle, General Taylor possessed, not only in greater degree than Santa Anna, but than most of those mentioned in American history. The stern determination in a crisis of battle was never more conspicuously displayed by General Taylor on any field, and that, when combined with

Pacheco, moved up to take this height, and at nine a heavy fire was opened. The cavalry charged at the same moment. Many of our corps acted badly; but much havoc, nevertheless, was made among the enemy, and the heights were carried by force of arms. *If at that juncture we had been attacked with vigor, we should probably have been defeated.*"—*Mexican Engineers' Report.*

the moral effect of his reputation as a successful general, could hardly have failed to impart the same spirit to his soldiers. His presence, and bold, determined bearing, had much to do with restoring the battle; but his entertainment of Santa Anna's message to ask "what he wanted," and his mission to the Mexican right wing, had the effect of placing it in jeopardy after it had once been won, and again his steady firmness of purpose had much effect in its second restoration.

But the fortunes of that day twice hung in the balance. That they were immediately saved once by the brilliant courage and hard fighting of Davis's Mississippi regiment, and again by the timely arrival and splendid execution of Bragg's battery, and that Davis first suggested his own movement,* and that Bragg moved without orders in the direction of the plateau,† and that both came in at the proper time and were both successful—these facts, while they render any comment upon the conduct of those officers or their commands unnecessary, yet add examples to the many of the supremacy of fortune in war.

* "General Wool was upon the ground, making great efforts to rally the men who had given way. I approached him, and asked if he would send another regiment to support me in an attack upon the enemy before us. He was alone, and, after promising the support, went in person to send it."—*Colonel Davis's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 192.*

† "As they were retiring by the very route they had advanced, I feared they would avail themselves of our weakness at that point, and renew the attack, regardless of our flag. I accordingly reversed my battery, and urged my horses to the utmost."—*Captain Bragg's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 202.*

In the movements of General Santa Anna, and in the progress of the battle, were developed all the energy of that officer in preparation, all his talent for strategy and for operating upon the minds of his countrymen, and all the good qualities of the Mexican troops; but, at the same time, all their want of moral power, and the inconstancy of purpose in a great crisis, characteristic of Mexican armies and leaders; which, in strange contradiction to the general national policy of their country, has rendered her efforts in arms against a powerful or determined adversary entirely fruitless.

The celerity and secrecy of the march from San Luis are almost unsurpassed. The movement from Encarnacion upon Agua Nueva, and the continued march to La Angostura, making nearly fifty miles in twenty-four hours, and the immediate commencement of the battle, when it is remembered that thirty-six of those miles were without water, and that the men had scanty subsistence, prove how terrible a Mexican army might be, had the troops of which it is composed only the moral force to prosecute the advantages which such qualifications for undergoing fatigue and privation place within its reach.

In the battle, however, although General Santa Anna immediately seized the point which offered advantage, and gained the point which he first desired, yet, as has since been asserted by one of his

generals,* there was a want of combination, and a failure to prosecute advantages when gained, while he kept his attention fixed upon the movements of one corps rather than the whole battle. Therefore he delayed bringing forward his reserves, and throwing the greatest mass in action upon the decisive point, which was, indeed, the plateau, and over it to the eminence to the left of Angostura, until his right wing had been beaten, and the American artillery and troops could concentrate upon the second point of attack. Had he made a powerful stroke at an earlier period of the battle, and strove to clear the plateau, it is possible that he might have gained the victory—certainly he would have stood a better chance for it. But, as he would then have met the three regiments, which, isolated and in advance, were overthrown at once by the rush of his masses, in position and near their artillery, and since four light guns held him in check, it is still a question of doubt even under the supposition.

* General Miñon.

CHAPTER XI.

Doniphan's Expedition into the Navajoe Country—Insurrection in New Mexico—Affair of Cañada—Affair of Embudo—Affair of Pueblo de Taos—Doniphan's March toward Chihuahua—Affair of Brazito—of Sacramento—American Occupation of Chihuahua—State of Affairs at that Place—Doniphan abandons it—Marches to Saltillo.

IN order to fulfill the promises made in his various proclamations to the inhabitants of New Mexico, of protecting them from the depredations of the Indians in their vicinity, General Kearney had left orders for Colonel Doniphan to enter the country of the Navajoes, west of Santa Fé, and, if possible, to make a treaty with the chiefs of that warlike tribe. Upon the arrival of the re-enforcements from Fort Leavenworth, Doniphan moved his regiment, in three detachments, by different routes, into the country, which was traversed, for most of its extent, without opposition. He was successful in concluding a treaty of peace and amity with the Navajoes, and the different detachments returned to the Rio Grande, on which they were concentrated, at Socorro, on the 12th of September. The march was one of remarkable interest, having been made in the winter, over snow-capped mountains, through a country previously but little known, and inhabited only by the barbarous tribes with which the treaty was made. But its story is more that of Western travelers than of the war with Mexico.

Having finished the duty, Doniphan prepared to move south, to join General Wool at Chihuahua, where it was expected that officer was or soon would be. At Valverde he found a large caravan of American merchants awaiting his movements, and on the 14th of December his advance marched from that place, followed on the 16th and 18th by the remainder of the regiment and convoy.*

The civil government which General Kearney had established in New Mexico was successfully administered, without the manifestation of any intention to oppose American authority on the part of the inhabitants, until the month of December, on the 15th day of which the authorities at Santa Fé received information of a contemplated insurrection.

The *ricos* of the country had found themselves of comparatively small importance since the occupation by the American army. They had all been in league with Armijo, and, during his administration, had enjoyed full opportunity of exercising official power for extortion and gain. Finding themselves, in many instances, thrust from office, and in all treated by the Americans with but little of the respect which they had exacted from their own people, they were, of course, hostile to the new government.

The great number of the inhabitants had been accustomed, from long habit, to pay attention to

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 496.

their chiefs, and to obey their priests without question. They appreciated none of the advantages which the new form of government gave to them, and entertained the hostility to foreigners common in all half-civilized countries; and this hostility was doubtless increased by the rough and careless manner of the Western volunteers.

The rebellion had been for some time contemplated at the time of the discovery of the conspiracy, and the names of two principal instigators, who immediately fled and escaped. Several arrests were nevertheless made at Santa Fé, and it was believed that the insurrection had been crushed at its commencement.* No further danger was anticipated, precautionary measures were abandoned, and small parties of Americans traversed the country without fear of molestation.

The principal military force was, at the time, at Santa Fé, under command of Colonel Price, of the second Missouri regiment of mounted volunteers, which had followed Kearney's movement from Fort Leavenworth. But various detachments were posted at the different villages of the territory, and most of the horses belonging to the troops were grazing in the plains, under charge of small parties.

While affairs were in a state of apparent security, on the 14th of January the insurrection broke out. On that day the governor, Charles Bent, a man who had been selected for the position by Gen-

* Colonel Price's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 520.

eral Kearney on account of his long intercourse with the New Mexicans and deservedly high character, was brutally murdered, with five others, civil officers of the territory, at San Fernando de Taos, a pueblo some fifty miles to the north of Santa Fé.* On the same day a crowd of Indians and New Mexicans attacked the buildings of a Mr. Turley, at Arroyo Honda, in the same valley. He had been for a long time a resident of the country, and it was believed that he was deservedly popular with the inhabitants. After a gallant resistance, in which the assailants suffered severely, the buildings were forced, and all the occupants except one man, who had succeeded in making his escape, were killed. Throughout the northern part of the province the insurgents murdered every American upon whom they could lay hands, and administered a like fate to all Mexicans who had accepted office under the new government.

The news of the rebellion reached Santa Fé on the 20th of January, by which time it was fully organized and in progress. The principal force, consisting in greater part of Pueblo Indians, led by their chiefs and the principal New Mexicans of the department, soon marched toward Santa Fé, while, in obedience to the missives of the leaders, the inhabitants of different villages joined in the rebellion, which daily became more formidable. Colonel Price became informed of the movements of

* Colonel Price's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 520.

the enemy by intercepted letters, and immediately took steps to meet the danger.*

He first ordered up the garrison of Albuquerque from the south, with directions for a portion of it to re-enforce Santa Fé, and the remainder to follow his movement. On the 23d he marched for the valley of Taos with 350 men (most of them dismounted), and four twelve pounder mountain howitzers.

At noon, on the following day, he fell in with the main force of the insurgents near Cañada, a small village north of Santa Fé. The enemy numbered near 1500, and had possession of highlands and buildings which commanded the road. Fearing that he might escape or take up a new position, upon receiving intelligence of his presence, Price quickened the march of his main force, leaving the train to follow as it might. Upon coming to Cañada, he sent his howitzers at once across a creek which intervened, and opened fire upon the houses and heights. While the American wagons were yet some distance in the rear, a party of Mexicans and Indians strove to turn the main force and cut them off, but were prevented by a threatened attack from the small number of mounted men belonging to the command. When the wagons arrived, a battalion of infantry thrust the enemy from a house upon the American right, and soon after the whole force was ordered to advance. The *mé-lée* became general, and, in a short time, the enemy

* Colonel Price's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 521.

was routed and dispersed, with a loss of thirty-six killed and a large number of wounded. The Americans had lost two killed and six wounded.*

The march was continued up the valley of the Rio del Norte, and on the morning of the 28th the command was re-enforced by the arrival of Captain Burgwin of the United States first dragoons, with his own and a company of Missouri volunteers, and one six pounder gun. Burgwin had been at Albuquerque, and, although his troops were mostly dismounted, he had made the march to overtake the main body with great rapidity. The command, thus augmented, amounted in all to 479 men and five pieces of artillery.

At La Joya, on the following day, it was learned that a party of insurgents occupied a pass on the road leading from the practicable wagon route to Taos, to the village of Embudo. The pass of Embudo was impracticable for either artillery or wagons, and at its narrowest point was barely wide enough for three men to pass abreast. The mountains rose sharp and rugged on either side, with clumps of cedars growing in the crevices of the rocks, which, with the irregularities of the surface, afforded excellent cover for a defensive party. The insurgents were posted about this point in strength; for, although they were badly armed and equipped, they numbered between six and seven hundred.

To force this pass, Captain Burgwin was detach-

* Colonel Price's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 522.

ed with a party of 180 men. Upon coming within range, he sent parties up the slopes on either side of the pass, whose fire soon told upon the enemy. The insurgents broke, and bounded away over the steep and rugged mountains with a speed which defied pursuit from the Americans. Burgwin's command proceeded on through the pass, and occupied the village without resistance, having lost one man killed and one wounded during the affair, and inflicted a loss of nearly eighty in all upon the enemy.*

On the 30th the detachment rejoined the main body at Trampas, and on the 1st of February the march was continued over the Taos mountain. Throughout that and the following day the rugged route lay through deep snow, and the severity of the weather and difficulty of the road tried the patience and hardihood of the troops. On the 3d the command reached San Fernando de Taos, the scene of the massacre of Governor Bent and his companions. San Fernando was occupied without resistance, for the insurgents had fortified themselves in their principal place, Pueblo de Taos, and were awaiting an attack. Colonel Price rode forward to reconnoiter the "pueblo," which, for an irregular Indian position, was one of great strength.

The buildings of the "pueblo" were two large houses, rising some seven or eight stories in an irregular pyramidal form, each capable of containing

* Colonel Price's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 523.

some five or six hundred men, and a strongly-built church, besides several others of smaller capacity. They were inclosed by a wall of adobes and pickets, of an irregular, pentagonal tracé, flanked by small bastions at the angles. The walls, houses, and church were all creneled for musketry.

After reconnoissance, Price determined to attack the church, which was at the northwestern angle of the inclosure. He accordingly brought up his howitzers, and cannonaded it for about two hours without any positive effect, when he withdrew his troops for the night to San Fernando.

On the morning of the 4th he advanced his whole force and took up position. The mounted men of the command were stationed on the east of the inclosure to intercept a retreat. The main body of the footmen, the six pounder, and two mountain howitzers were posted on the north, and two companies and two howitzers on the west. The artillery opened fire upon the town at nine o'clock, and continued playing until eleven, by which time it was considered impracticable to break the walls with such light pieces, and Price determined to carry the "pueblo" by assault.

Captain Burgwin moved forward the two companies on the west, and at the same time four others advanced from the north, against the northwestern angle of the inclosure.

The assailants were received with a heavy fire, but nevertheless they rushed on and gained shelter on the western side of the church. The thick

walls of the building were then attacked with axes, and while parties on that side endeavored to make a practicable breach, others, leaving their shelter, strove ineffectually to force the door. In this attempt Burgwin was mortally wounded. In the mean time small holes had been cut, through which the assailants pitched in shells upon the occupants, and some, having climbed up to the roof, fired it. The Indians defended themselves stubbornly, and fired fast and heavily in the direction of the Americans. The six pounder was brought round to the vicinity of the occupied point, and opened upon the town with grape, which drove the Indians hanging about the smaller houses to cover. The gun was then advanced to within sixty yards of the church, and the holes which had been cut through the walls with axes were soon increased to a practicable breach. A few shell and stands of grape were thrown in, and the assailants rushed through the opening. The church was found to be nearly deserted, and the Indians soon after abandoned the western portion of the village. The main body took shelter with their women and children in the large houses of the "pueblo." Some endeavored to escape to the mountains, but the cavalry posted to intercept a retreat cut them off almost to a man.

The Americans occupied the abandoned houses during the night, and early on the following morning the enemy sued for peace. Colonel Price, thinking that the severe loss which had been inflicted would prevent further outbreaks, granted it on con-

dition that the instigators of the rebellion should be delivered up to him. The condition was complied with, and on the 7th of January several of them were hung at San Fernando. Of the five principal leaders of the insurrection, but one escaped the fate of battle or of execution, and he was not present in any principal affair.

At Pueblo de Taos the insurgents lost one hundred and fifty killed, besides a large number of wounded. The Americans had seven killed and forty-six wounded, of which many died.

While these events took place, minor encounters occurred in different parts of the valley. The insurgents were busy in stampeding and stealing the American horses, and cutting off small parties of grazers. In breaking up a gang which had collected in the valley of the Mora, Captain Hendley, of the Missouri volunteers, was killed and his party repulsed.* But the insurrection had been effectually checked, so far as operations in large bodies were concerned, by the result of the affair at the Pueblo de Taos, although deep-rooted hostility to the Americans was manifested in the predatory warfare which was carried on for some subsequent time by detached parties.

The civil government which had been established by General Kearney became almost a dead letter from the time of the rebellion, and thencefor-

* Captain Hendley and Lieutenant Fitzpatrick to Colonel Price. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 531-533.

ward to the close of the war military power was necessary to vindicate the supremacy of the laws.

Colonel Doniphan's command passed the Jornada del Muerto, a distance of ninety miles, over a dry, arid desert, by detachments, in safety. The passage of this desert by so large a body, accompanied as it was by the large convoy of merchant wagons, was in itself a remarkable achievement; and that the command was able to concentrate, in any condition for service, immediately afterward, is indeed a matter of wonder. At one time, however, a portion of the command was providentially relieved by the fall of a heavy shower of rain, when men and animals had nearly given out from thirst: an occurrence remarkable in itself, for at that season of the year rain seldom falls in that region.

Upon arriving at Doña Ana, information was received that a corps of 700 Mexicans, with six pieces of artillery, was at El Paso, in readiness to oppose the advance. In consequence of rumors to the same effect which had reached him at Valverde, Doniphan had sent back orders to Major Clarke to join him with a battery of four sixes and two twelve pounder howitzers.* Clarke received the order, and marched from Santa Fé a short time previous to the insurrection.

The northwestern departments of Mexico, besides New Mexico and California, had been left to

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 497.

their own resources for defense by the central government. The only regiment of regular Mexican troops in that quarter was that of the Vera Cruz dragoons, which had been stationed at Santa Fé, but had fled with Governor Armijo to Chihuahua upon Kearney's approach. The men were no better than ordinary Mexican troopers, and much worse mounted and equipped.

General Heredia, who commanded the northwestern departments of Mexico, and Don Angel Trias, governor of Chihuahua, had received information of the intended march of General Wool to that city, as well as of the occupation of New Mexico by Kearney, and had been for some time actively engaged in preparing for defense. The militia of the neighboring departments had been called out, and at the time of Doniphan's approach there were under arms, in the State of Chihuahua, nearly 4000 men, besides an indefinite number of rancheros, armed with "*machetes*" and other ordinary weapons of the country. A fair proportion of artillery was at hand, and it was deemed that a good defense might be made against an attack either from the east or the north.

On the 23d of December Doniphan continued his march from Doña Ana in the direction of Chihuahua. His force, including the merchants, numbered 856 effective men, all mounted and armed with rifles.* They were nearly all hardy back-

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 497.

woodsmen, excellent marksmen, and full of courage, but what discipline they were possessed of amounted to nothing.* On the 25th the command arrived at Brazito, an encampment one day's march from El Paso. The advanced battalion of 500 had halted, dismounted, parked the baggage, and, while the rear detachment was yet at a distance of some miles, the men were scattered over the country in search of wood and water. At this juncture, some most in advance returned and reported the approach of an enemy. The rally was sounded at once, and the force was formed for battle as fast as it could be collected.

To those acquainted with American volunteers, especially the rangers of the West, the scene will readily present itself; but to military men, accustomed only to the maneuvers of regular troops, or to civilians, whose knowledge of the operations of war is derived from reading, hardly any description would suffice to give an idea of the forming of American volunteers when taken by surprise. The hurry, bustle, confusion, want of method, shouting, discharging of rifles, reloading, and uncouth formations, and the bravery, nonchalance, and hearty good-will with which the men take whatever place they happen to for battle, altogether form a scene rarely to be met with in the military operations of any other nation.

With all these, however, a line was quickly formed, but not before the enemy had approached

* Mr. Ruxton's work.

within half a mile and halted. His force consisted of 1220 men, of whom 500 were mounted. Of artillery, he had one small howitzer. His line was formed with the active battalion of Chihuahua cavalry on the right, the infantry (national guards) in the center, and the Vera Cruz dragoons on the left. While forming his line, and before the Americans were in any thing like array, a Mexican officer was sent with a black flag to demand that the American commander should proceed to the Mexican lines for a conference, and with a threat, in case of refusal, that the Mexican troops would charge and capture him, giving no quarter. He executed his singular mission in good style; but Doniphan's answer, characteristic of his troops, was, "*to charge and be d—d.*"*

The Mexican line advanced and opened fire with the howitzer, and with muskets and escopetas, at a distance of four hundred yards. The cavalry, extending to the right and left, threatened an attack on the American flanks. But, after delivering three rounds, the infantry approached to within long rifle range, and the volunteers commenced an effective practice, which threw their enemy into confusion, and completely checked his advance. In the mean time twenty volunteers mounted and made at the Vera Cruz dragoons, which, although numbering thrice the American force at the point of attack, were soon overthrown. The whole body

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 497.

of Mexicans fled to the mountains in the vicinity, having lost forty-three killed, and near one hundred and fifty wounded; of the Americans but seven were wounded, and those but slightly.*

On the 27th Doniphan entered the village of El Paso without opposition. Having ascertained there that General Wool had not advanced upon Chihuahua, and that his advance upon that town would be unassisted, he was obliged to await the arrival of his artillery. He remained in inactivity at El Paso during the following month, but the artillery finally came up in the early part of February, 1847, and on the 8th the advance upon Chihuahua was resumed. The Mexican forces, after the affair at Brazito, had kept at a respectful distance, and it was not until the 25th that any thing like a demonstration of opposition was manifested. Information was then received that a large force was at Encinillas, a hacienda belonging to Governor Trias, but upon the arrival of the Americans on the 26th it was found to have retreated. On the following day, however, upon arriving at the encampment of El Sauz, it was learned that the enemy was in position at the pass of the Sacramento, fifteen miles in advance.

The road south from El Sauz leads through an open prairie valley between two sterile mountains. The pass of the Sacramento is about one and a half miles wide, and is formed by a spur which

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 498.

juts from the mountain on the west. Along the northern base of the spur was the Rio Sacramento, which turns to the south near the base of the eastern mountain. Some two miles to the north the main valley is traversed by the bed of the Arroyo Seco, in a general direction from northwest to southeast, until, near the base of the eastern mountain, it turns to the south and empties into the Rio Sacramento. Between these two streams the ground is elevated, and divided into two tables. The western is nearly level, and of the greatest extent. The eastern is more elevated, and more diversified in its topography.

The road to Chihuahua from the north crosses the Arroyo Seco, rises upon the elevated land, and, passing to the west of the dividing line between the two tables, descends, and, turning to the southeast, crosses the Sacramento at a ford at the base of the spur from the west.

The Mexican authorities, both civil and military, had been for some time engaged in fortifying the positions about the pass, and had expended much labor in the endeavor to make it defensible. The whole northern crest of the elevation was covered by intrenchments, though most of them were but simple breast-works for infantry. The main fortifications were upon the eastern table. At its northeastern angle was a rugged hill, the Cerro Frijoles, some hundred and fifty feet in height, which was crowned with a round battery. Two other batteries were along the northern crest. Along the

dividing ridge between the tables, a line of intrenchments, consisting of round batteries, connected by breast-works for infantry, extended south across the whole plateau. The whole system on this front looked upon the flank of the road. High up on the Cerro Sacramento, south of the river, a round battery, similar to that on the Cerro Frijoles, commanded the other positions at long range. Upon the east the position was protected by intrenchments placed at convenient positions, but the deep bed of the Arroyo Seco was the strongest defense in that quarter.

These defenses, such as they were, completely blocked the direct passage of the road, but the system of works on the north could be easily turned on the west, and the western table could be gained without exposure to any fire. There, indeed, the main line of works upon the west of the Mexican position was presented directly in the front of an enemy, which if he refused in his advance, he must pass under the fire from the line and from the Cerro Sacramento.

To maintain this position, General Heredia had a force of near 4000 men of all arms; 1200 cavalry from Durango and Chihuahua, under General Garcia Conde, 1200 infantry, 1420 rancheros, and 300 artillerists, with ten guns, of nine, eight, six, and four pounders. The cavalry was composed of the active regiments of the departments, with the exception of the Vera Cruz dragoons. The infantry was the ordinary militia of the country, enrolled for the emer-

gency, and the rancheros were but rancheros, armed with lassos, corn knives, lances, and old-fashioned escopetas.* As for the proficiency of the artillery, their performances on the field told but little.

When Doniphan approached on the 28th, the Mexican forces took position in their works, and manned and armed their batteries. Finding the direct road obstructed, and that the route to the western side of the plateau was practicable for wagons, Doniphan inclined the head of his column from the road while out of range, and moved rapidly in that direction. He gained the plateau without opposition, and parked the wagons, 315 in number, on the western verge.

The enemy, in the mean time, advanced his cavalry and a battery of artillery from the intrenchments. Doniphan formed a line to oppose him, and before the Mexican guns were unmasked, the American artillery, which was in the center of the line, opened a heavy fire. The Mexican cavalry fell away from their artillery, and soon after gave way and retreated. The artillery replied to the American fire, but had little effect; the shot were nearly all aimed too high, and passed over the American line, doing no damage other than killing a few mules and oxen of the train. The cavalry having retreated beyond the intrenchments, the guns were also soon after drawn back. The efforts of the Mexicans were then, for a time, directed to

* Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 560.

removing their wounded, of which there were many, and a gun which had been dismounted, and, so soon as these were accomplished, all the cavalry retired slowly, crossed the Rio Sacramento, and halted out of range.

During these movements on the part of the enemy, the American line had been advanced to the right and front, nearly within range of the guns on the Cerro Sacramento, whence three mounted companies and two twelve pounder howitzers were advanced against the line of intrenchments. The movement, although over rough ground, was executed at speed, and the howitzers were thrown into battery within short distance of the works, while the troopers, without any order or combination other than that all were attacking in some sort, rode along the lines seeking an entrance, and discharging their carbines at the enemy. The Mexican resistance, though noisy while it lasted, was short and inefficient. Hardly waiting to notice whether their fire was effective or not, the infantry soldiers immediately in front of the attack broke and fled, leaving a clear field for the assailants. The remaining American troops, meanwhile, had advanced, and dismounted upon nearing the intrenchments. Moving forward on foot, they obtained good rifle range, and the enemy at once fled along the whole line. The six pounders, during this affair, had cannonaded the works on the northern crest, over the western line, in reverse, and when the volunteers rushed in they carried these also,

and, continuing the advance, got possession of the Cerro Frijoles. The Mexicans fled in every direction, pursued by the mounted volunteers, who cut down great numbers of them. But one attempt was made to rally. A crowd of lancers came up, and endeavored to turn the American right to attack the train, which had followed the movement of the troops, but they fled before the fire of the six pounders.

The battery on the Cerro Sacramento had, during the engagement, kept up its distant cannonade upon the Americans ; but it did no damage, for the range and angle of depression were both too great. When the positions upon the plateau had been carried, the American artillery was directed upon it, and a party of mounted volunteers crossed the river to storm the height on horseback ;* another battalion crossed on foot ; but the whole Mexican force in that direction fled without resistance, and the rout and victory were complete.

In this affair the Mexican forces lost three hundred in killed, nearly the same number in wounded, forty prisoners, all their artillery, ammunition, and stores of subsistence, such as they were (beans and pinola).

The Americans lost but one man killed, one mortally and seven others slightly wounded.

On the following day the column entered Chi-

* "I immediately ordered the men to remount and charge the battery on our right."—*Lieutenant-colonel Mitchell's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 503.*

huahua without opposition, for the force which had been dispersed at Sacramento had not rallied. Governor, generals, colonels, and other officers were all in full flight to the south, and the common soldiers had taken refuge in the mountains. But, having entered the city, Doniphan found himself in a position of some embarrassment. His horses were broken down by the length of the march, and his whole command had been without pay from the time of leaving Missouri. The backwoodsmen of whom it was composed, having little or no idea of discipline, after entering the city, indulged in all kinds of license. The officers were unable to impose any restraint upon the men, and, in the language of the colonel, the state of things was "confusion worse confounded."*

Rumor had informed Doniphan that General Wool had been cut off near Saltillo, which, although he did not believe, prevented him from sending a messenger. On the 20th of March, however, he learned that Santa Anna had fallen back on San Luis, and that communication was practicable with Wool's head-quarters. On that day he sent a report of his position and an application for orders. He had previously contemplated moving toward Saltillo for the purpose of forming a junction at all hazards, and had only been prevented by the urgent solicitations of the American merchants to re-

* Colonel Doniphan to General Wool, March 20th, 1847. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1128.

main for their protection. Doniphan refused to remain for any length of time, and prepared to advance to Saltillo.

When General Taylor received information of his position, he sent orders for the movement, and on the 26th and 27th of April detachments of the command marched from Chihuahua. Moving through Parras, on the route by which Wool had contemplated to advance, it arrived at Saltillo on the 22d of May, without other hostile adventure than a skirmish of a small party with some Indians near Parras.

From Saltillo it proceeded at once to the Rio Grande, and thence to the United States, and was discharged at New Orleans.

By itself, the expedition of Doniphan's command is most remarkable. That a corps should have been raised, marched three thousand miles through an almost unknown and uncultivated country, have fought its way against overwhelming numbers, and returned to its point of departure, and all within the space of one year, and that, too, without the aid of modern locomotion for the active part of its route, is indeed an event to which it is in vain to search for a recorded parallel. The account of the various adventures, and of the different regions which were visited, would form altogether a most interesting narrative.

As a military movement, too, the march was remarkable. It is, without exception, the greatest distance ever traversed in so short a period by any

body of troops ; and accomplished, as it was, over many of the greatest obstacles encountered in military operations, the display of energy and perseverance was creditable to both officers and men of the command.

But as for the effect upon the war, the expedition was almost, if not entirely useless ; for it neither furthered the prosecution of the policy of the United States in seizing upon the territories of Mexico as indemnity, nor did it increase the inducements of the government of the latter to make peace. Chihuahua, as a region for resources, was worthless to both parties. Its possession or its loss gave or took nothing from the central government which might conduce to the support of the war. Certainly it was not on the route by which the heart of the country could be reached by the Americans.

The only furtherance of the public interest which was accomplished by this expedition was the display of force in the Navajoe country ; and, as the treaty concluded with the chiefs of that tribe was doubtless the most useful, the march through that country was the most difficult and remarkable of all the achievements of the command.

American bravery and Mexican cowardice were both most signally displayed in the affairs at Brazito and the pass of the Sacramento. Of skill there was but little demonstration on either side. That 4000 men in intrenchments, although indifferently armed, should fly, after a short cannonade, before

the wild rush of less than one fourth their number of undisciplined backwoodsmen, having nothing to aid them but their personal courage and their good rifles, is indeed remarkable, and proves conclusively the cowardice of the first and the bravery of the second.

It is difficult to see any reason why General Heredia should have advanced his cavalry and artillery alone to the action, when his enemy must necessarily have been obliged to attack him in his intrenchments, or why these should have been masked, while he commenced the battle with one third of his force against the full strength of the Americans. By attempting it, his cavalry was beaten at once, and, had any thing been wanting to insure the flight of the infantry, it was found in the rapid retreat of the advanced forces. Had the infantry stood at all, it is hard to perceive how the Americans could have conquered with so little loss.

The American volunteer officers who were in this battle have made reports which, for inflation of style, will compare well with those of Mexican commanders; and some have seemed to think that they have discovered new important principles in the military art.* Nevertheless, it would not be safe to trust to their experience, or to act upon the fruit of it, their recommendations. It will be difficult to convince thinking men that cav-

* "It is abundantly shown, in the charge made by Captain Weightman with the section of howitzers, that they can be used in any charge with great effect."—*Colonel Doniphan's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress*, p. 501.

alry is the proper arm for storming intrenchments, or that twelve pounder howitzers are particularly efficient in such a charge, even if unlimbered within fifty yards of the enemy, unless, indeed, he is in flight at the time of the advance.

Such folly, if perpetrated in operations against men who would stand at all, and who were armed with any kind of fire-arms which they knew how to use, would only insure the destruction of both howitzers and cavalry; and yet the idea has been thrust forth in official reports, and newspaper editors and critics have given it their sanction.

CHAPTER XII.

Commodore Stockton's Action in California—Insurrection—Preparations to suppress it—General Kearney's Arrival—Affair at San Pasqual—At Hill of San Bernardo—Expedition from San Diego to Ciudad los Angeles—Passage of the Rio San Gabriel—Affairs at Los Angeles—Fremont's Action in the North—Advance from Monterey—Surprise of San Luis Obispo—Advance to the South—Capitulation of Cowenga—Dispute between Stockton and Kearney—Kearney and Fremont—Arrival of Commodores Shubrick and Biddle, and Colonel Mason—Trial and Conviction of Fremont.

SOON after Commodore Stockton had established the civil government of the territory of California, in what he believed to be "successful operation," and had restored apparent "peace and harmony" to the people,* he received intelligence, through

* Commodore Stockton to Mr. Bancroft, August 24th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 265.

the Mexican newspapers, of the official declarations of war, and the energetic preparation for its prosecution on both sides.*

He had established a tariff, and issued orders for the elections of different officers soon after the occupation of the Ciudad de los Angeles. Various officials of the territory under the Mexican government had come in, or had been taken prisoners, who were liberated upon parole of honor not to serve against the United States during the war, without exchange. This they readily gave, and professed themselves satisfied with the new state of things. Believing that the American authority was firmly established, the commodore intended to relinquish his civil and military duties, and on the 24th of August commenced preparations for leaving the country under the government of Lieutenant-colonel Fremont. On that day Fremont was notified of his ulterior intentions, and soon after, on the 2d of September,† commissioned as military commandant of California. He was ordered to increase his battalion of volunteers to 300 men, of which 50 were to be stationed at Ciudad de los Angeles, 50 at Monterey, 50 at San Francisco, and 25 at each Santa Barbara and San Diego, leaving the remaining 100 for active service in the field. Of the present force of the battalion, he was ordered to locate

* Commodore Stockton to Major Fremont, August 24th, 1846. Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 675.

† Colonel Fremont's Trial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 110.

50 men, under Captain Gillespie, at Ciudad de los Angeles, 25 at Santa Barbara, 50 at Monterey, and 50 at San Francisco, and to proceed in person to recruit his battalion to the required number, 300.

At this time the commodore intended, after he had completed his arrangements, and delivered up his newly-acquired civil and military honors, to sail with the squadron under his command to the south of Mexico, capture Acapulco, land a force, and advance on the capital to co-operate with General Taylor, or, at least, to make a powerful demonstration in his favor.* Unfortunately for the demonstration of its impracticability, this scheme was not allowed an opportunity for development or execution.

Fremont soon after proceeded to the Rio Sacramento to recruit, having disposed of his California battalion as ordered. The commodore returned to his squadron, and sailed for Monterey, taking on board a small detachment which had been left at Santa Barbara. Soon after he received a rumor that a thousand Wallawalla Indians were about to attack Sutter's Fort on the Sacramento, and proceeded to San Francisco.

There, on the 30th of December, a courier arrived from Gillespie, with the information that an insurrection had broken out at Ciudad de los Angeles soon after the departure of the commodore, and that his command was besieged in the government

* Commodore Stockton's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1045.

house. Stockton at once directed Captain Mervine to proceed to San Pedro in the frigate *Savannah*, and from that point to relieve Gillespie; sent orders to Fremont to join him at San Francisco with all the equipment which he could obtain, and detached officers in various directions to recruit volunteers for the battalion.*

On the 12th of October Fremont arrived at San Francisco, and embarked on board the merchant ship "*Sterling*" for San Pedro. Stockton sailed the same day in the Congress; but, as he received dispatches by a merchant vessel from Monterey that that town was in danger of being attacked, he put in there and landed re-enforcements. On the 23d he reached San Pedro, where he found the *Savannah* frigate, with Gillespie's volunteers on board. They had retired from the Ciudad de los Angeles under the terms of a convention which Gillespie had signed with General Flores, chief of the insurgents, who, at the time of the outbreak, was a prisoner of war on parole.†

Two weeks previous to Stockton's arrival, Captain Mervine had landed his seamen and marines, for the purpose of marching, in conjunction with Gillespie's party, on Ciudad de los Angeles. Twelve miles out of San Pedro he had fallen in with a strong force of Californians, with one piece of artillery. A skirmish ensued, in which, as the Amer-

* Commodore Stockton's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1045.

† *Idem ibidem*, and Colonel Fremont's Defense.

icans had no artillery, they were worsted, and the party fell back, with some loss, to San Pedro, where they embarked on board the frigate.

Stockton landed a strong force on the day after his arrival, and San Pedro was reoccupied; but, after waiting some time without receiving any information of Fremont or his movements, he re-embarked, and proceeded to San Diego. At this place he received letters, in which Fremont informed him that, as he had learned that it would be impracticable to obtain a mount for his command in the south under existing circumstances, he had put in at Monterey, where he could make all preparations to force a passage to the Ciudad de los Angeles by land. Upon this Stockton ordered Captain Mervine to proceed in his vessel to Monterey, to aid Fremont in his preparations, and sent instructions to Lieutenant Minor, who commanded at San Diego, to make endeavors to procure horses for transporting an expedition of 250 men, which the commodore proposed to lead from San Diego.*

San Diego had been in a state of siege, and the garrison straitened for want of provisions, for some time before Stockton's arrival. While preparations were going on, the place was attacked by a strong party of insurgents. The Congress had been run over the bar, and grounded inside in such a manner that there was danger of her tumbling over; but, notwithstanding the necessity of their presence on board, a strong party of men was landed under

* Stockton's Report.

Captain Gillespie, who, in connection with the garrison, soon repulsed the assailants.

The efforts which had been made to procure horses and subsistence resulted in obtaining about ninety horses and two hundred head of beef cattle; but the horses were so much broken down that it was judged to be impracticable to advance before a fortnight. During the interval the force about San Diego was employed in constructing a fort for the more complete protection of the town, and in making up the necessary articles of equipment.

About the 3d of December Stockton received a letter from General Kearney, informing him of his approach, and requesting information concerning the state of affairs in California. He immediately sent Captain Gillespie with a detachment of thirty-five men and a nine pounder to open a communication.

General Kearney, after having sent back Major Sumner with 200 dragoons on receipt of the intelligence of Stockton's and Fremont's apparent conquest, continued his march, without any interruption, through the Indian country into the settlements of California. The first intimation of any thing like hostility to be apprehended was obtained on the 22d of November, when a camp was discovered, which, from the trail, appeared to have been left that morning by a large mounted force. It was at first believed that General Castro had reunited his forces in Sonora, and was returning;

but, upon close reconnaissance of the party, which was fallen in with, in camp, during the day, it proved to be a drove of horses, under charge of a man who represented himself as a poor employée of several *ricos*, on his way with the drove to the Sonora market. The chief men of the party were sent in by Lieutenant Emory, who conducted the reconnaissance, to General Kearney, and the drove was detained, in order to remount the dragoons, whose horses had nearly all given out, and whose mules were in but little better condition.*

On the following day, a Mexican, well mounted and muffled, and with evident preparation for a journey, was intercepted, brought in, and searched, and proved to be the bearer of several important letters. They were addressed to General Castro, his brother, and different men of note in Sonora, and gave an account of the insurrectionary movements in California up to the time of their date, October 15th. It was ascertained that the drove of horses which had been captured on the previous evening was intended, in part, for General Castro, and, being their legal prize, the dragoons were ordered to be remounted. The horses were, however, all wild, and but little fitted for immediate service.

The march was continued over a most difficult and desert country for several following days, during which the rations were consumed, and horse-flesh was used for food. On the 3d, however, the

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 95.

command arrived at Warner's rancheria, in the valley of Agua Caliente, on the road to San Diego. At this point information was received that the American forces were in possession of San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco, but that the insurgents held all other parts of the country. On the 3d another capture of horses was effected by Lieutenant Davidson, but, like those previously taken, they were wild and unbroken.*

On the 5th of December the command was joined by Captain Gillespie's party from San Diego, who brought information that the enemy was in force at San Pasqual, three leagues distant, as was afterward ascertained, under Don Andreas Pico. A party was sent forward from the rancheria of Santa Maria, under Lieutenant Hammond, of the first dragoons, who returned at two o'clock on the following morning with information that he had found the enemy and had been observed. As he was then on the direct road to San Diego, all by-ways having been passed, Kearney determined to move forward and attack the enemy before day-break on the following morning.

Twelve dragoons, under Captain Johnston, constituted the advance guard, with which marched the general and staff. Fifty dragoons, mounted, in greater part, on the mules which had been ridden from New Mexico, under Captain Moore, and Captain Gillespie's volunteers, followed next, and

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 107.

two mountain howitzers, under Lieutenant Davidson, brought up the rear. The remaining troops and all the baggage were left in the rear, to follow at daylight.

At dawn on the 6th of May the American force arrived within sight of the enemy, near the Indian village of San Pasqual. Kearney, with his staff, was in the advance, preceded only by the advanced guard under Captain Johnston. He ordered a trot, then a charge, and the engagement was commenced.* Pico received the charge with a continued fire, and his men gave way. The dragoons followed in pursuit, but the Californians soon rallied and returned, while the dragoons were scattered. They killed Captains Johnston and Moore, and sixteen non-commissioned officers and privates, mortally wounded Lieutenant Hammond, wounded General Kearney, Lieutenant Warner, of the topographical engineers, Captains Gillespie and Gibson, of the volunteers, and eleven soldiers and employées, and, in the *melée*, carried off one of the mountain howitzers, neither of which was opened during the affair. Having inflicted this loss, they retired, taking with them their wounded.† A large body soon after showed itself in the American rear, which occasioned fears for the safety of the train, and a party was sent to bring it up. This was accomplished without opposition, and the

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 108.

† General Kearney's Official Report. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 515.

Americans remained for the night in the vicinity of the village.

Captain Turner succeeded to the command during the temporary disability of the general, and on that evening sent a communication to Commodore Stockton reporting the engagement, and suggesting the propriety of his sending a considerable force to meet him on the road or at San Pasqual. The prospect, as stated in his note, would appear to have been gloomy, for the command was without provisions, and it was deemed that it might be impracticable to obtain cattle from the ranch in the vicinity.*

The night was spent in burying the dead and preparing ambulances for the wounded. But the position of the force, among the rocks on the side of the road, although defensible, was one which allowed few resting places.

On the following morning General Kearney resumed the command, and marched, in escort of his wounded and baggage, to the rancheria of San Bernardo. At this place he collected a large number of cattle; but, as there was no grass in the immediate vicinity of the rancheria, the column moved toward the dry bed of the Rio San Bernardo, which had been left some miles to the left in the march, the captured cattle being driven with the command.

Pico's troops had fallen back along the road to a position beyond the rancheria, and soon after the

* Fremont's Trial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 188.

Americans moved off the main body of the enemy advanced upon the rear, while a party dashed at speed toward a hill immediately on the left of the route which Kearney was following. The Americans moved rapidly in that direction also, but the Californians reached it first. They were attacked by the American advance of some ten or twelve men, and driven back, with the loss of several wounded. The main force came up and occupied a defensive position, but in the race Pico had succeeded in carrying off all the cattle.*

The situation of Kearney's party was desperate. The provisions were all gone, the horses dead, the mules knocked up, and the rapid movement to gain the defensive position on the hill had convinced the general that it was out of the question to move with his sick and baggage in the face of Pico's cavalry. He therefore determined to halt for the night. On the following morning, the messenger, Lieutenant Godey, of the volunteers, who had been sent with Captain Turner's note to San Diego, was captured, with his party, within sight of the American position.† Pico immediately sent in a flag of truce, with an offer to exchange the prisoners, four in number, for a like number of Californians. Kearney had but one to exchange, which he did for one of the party, and thus received information of the safe arrival of the letter at San Diego. The answer

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 110.

† Colonel Benton's Speech. Appendix to Congressional Globe, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 982.

which Stockton had transmitted had been *cached* by Godey just previous to his capture, but was found by the enemy.

It being impracticable to move with the wounded, although out of provisions and distant from water, it was determined to remain on the hill.

The fattest mule was killed for meat, and holes bored for water, and, with the supply thus obtained, a shift was made for two days. On the night of the eighth, three persons, Kit Carson, Acting-lieutenant Beale, of the navy, and an Indian servant, volunteered to go to San Diego, from which San Bernardo is distant twenty-nine miles. The expedition was one of extreme peril, for the enemy had all the roads, and was in force within striking distance, on the opposite side of the river bed; but, after a night of suffering adventure and a day in concealment, all three succeeded in reaching San Diego on the morning of the 9th, with the intelligence of the dangerous situation of the party on the hill.*

On the morning of the 10th Pico attacked the camp, driving in advance of his troops a number of wild horses, which were driven back by the Americans, and the attack was discontinued. A few horses, killed in the encounter, were used for food. As many of the wounded were able to travel, it was determined to attempt a movement on

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 111, and Colonel Benton's Speech. Appendix to Congressional Globe, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 982.

the following morning, without awaiting re-enforcement; but, during the night, the party was relieved by the arrival of some two hundred sailors and marines, under Lieutenant Gray, of the navy, who had been sent by Commodore Stockton from San Diego.

The position of the troops on the hill of San Bernardo was, at the time, nearly in extremis. Out of provisions, without baggage—for much of it had been burned in the preparations for the movement—without animals—for most of them had been turned loose on account of the want of forage—and with a large number of wounded for the strength of the party, it is difficult to see how the escape could have been made good unless the re-enforcement had arrived; and, unless a move had been attempted, the whole party must have been captured or starved.

Upon the arrival of Godey at San Diego, Stockton had made preparations to send a re-enforcement. While they were in progress, Beale, Carson, and the Indian had come in, and, in the urgency of the case, Stockton increased the strength of the party to over 200 men, with one piece of artillery, and sent it off at ten o'clock at night, under orders to march only at night.*

Pico retired on the junction of Gray's party with Kearney's, and on the 11th the whole American

* Commodore Stockton's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1051, and Testimony before Court Martial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 189.

force marched for San Diego, where it arrived on the 12th. Pico's force, in his affairs with General Kearney, has been variously stated at from 80 to 160 men, and his loss as variously from 11 to higher numbers.

During the month of December an expedition was organized at San Diego against Ciudad de los Angeles. Stockton meanwhile continued to exercise his assumed functions as governor and commander of the territory, with at least the tacit consent of General Kearney, for he had made an informal offer to the general to turn over the functions of the office to him, which had been declined.* Upon the morning of the 29th Kearney volunteered to take the command of the troops which were about to march against the enemy, which Stockton assented to. The force consisted of the dragoons serving on foot, a battalion of sailors and marines, a company of volunteers—in all, about 500 men, and six pieces of artillery of various calibers.

On the 4th of January, when past the deserted mission of Flores, on the road to Ciudad de los Angeles, a flag of truce was received from General Flores, the chief of the insurgents, proposing a suspension of hostilities in California, and to leave the sovereignty of the territory to be decided by the general result of the war between the United States and Mexico. Stockton, who accompanied

* Testimony before Court Martial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 189.

the expedition in the character of governor and commander-in-chief, at once refused to accede to the proposition, and the march was continued.*

Approaching the Rio San Gabriel on the 8th of January, the enemy was discovered upon the opposite bank. The river was about one hundred yards wide, knee deep, and flowing over quicksand. On the American side, the approach was nearly level; but, a short distance from the opposite shore, a bank fifty feet in height afforded a commanding position for the Mexican artillery. The American bank was fringed with a thick undergrowth, and the space on the opposite side, between the river and the height, was also partially covered.

As the Americans approached the thicket, they were received with a scattering fire from the enemy's skirmishers. In the mean while a battery was being planted upon the height on the opposite side of the river, supported on either flank by a heavy squadron of cavalry.

A battalion of sailors was ordered to deploy and cross the stream, which was effected under fire without serious loss. The American artillery was then dragged over, and opened a lively fire upon the height, which rendered that of the enemy wild and inefficient. The train and cattle passed without hinderance, although a party of cavalry attempted to charge upon the rear guard; it fell

* Stockton's Report. Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1051.

back in haste before a few volleys. By the time the whole baggage train was brought over, the enemy ceased his fire. He soon after made a charge upon the American left, which was received in square and repulsed, and at the same time threatened the right with no better success. The Americans soon after made a rush for the height, supposing that would be the contested point, but the enemy had abandoned it and retreated from the field.*

On the following morning the command advanced upon the Ciudad de los Angeles over the broad plain of the Mesa. Scattered parties of the enemy hung about its flanks during the march, and, after moving five or six miles, his main body was discovered in position upon the right of the road, under the crest of a depression in the plain. The American forces inclined to the left over the plain to avoid giving him advantage in posting his artillery. As they arrived opposite the enemy's position, Flores's guns opened at long range, without much effect at first, but in the mean time he deployed his force and took position with two small pieces of artillery directly in front, leaving two nine pounders to play upon the American flank. The fire from the nine pounders became annoying as the Americans advanced, and their artillery was opened in reply, which silenced them in a few

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 119, and Stockton's Report, Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1052.

minutes. The command again advanced, and the enemy came down upon the left and rear in a charge, but he was speedily repulsed, and retreated with his dead and wounded (which were picked up by his horsemen without dismounting) to the mountains.

In these two affairs the Americans lost one killed and fourteen wounded, including two officers.

On the 10th a flag of truce arrived with proposals for the surrender of the town, which was distant but a few miles, upon guarantee of respect to persons and property, which was given. The command entered during the morning, and, after having quelled a riot, secured possession of the capital of Upper California. General Flores retreated to Sonora.*

While these events were transpiring, Lieutenant-colonel Fremont had been engaged in organizing a volunteer force in the northern part of the country, and during the month of December he commenced his march for the south, with a force of 300 mounted men and three pieces of artillery. His first movement was upon the mission of San Luis Obispo, which he took by surprise, after a secret march of one hundred and fifty miles, and captured the commandant, Don Jesus Pico, with thirty-five others. Don Jesus was the head of the insurgents at the time, and also a prisoner upon

* Emory's Journal. Executive Document, No. 7, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 120, and Stockton's Report, Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1052.

parole. He was sentenced to death by a court martial, but the sentence was remitted by Fremont, who thus secured his influence in future attempts to tranquilize the country. Having this object in view, in his future movements Fremont abstained from any hostile action against the inhabitants of the towns through which he passed, or against the small parties of the enemy which hovered in his vicinity. After a long and tedious march over a mountainous country, in the month of January he arrived with his force in the vicinity of the Ciudad de los Angeles. The main Mexican force in arms in California, under Don Andreas Pico, was then encamped in the plains of Cowenga. Fremont sent a peremptory summons, to which he received an answer requesting a parley.*

The result was a convention, by which the Californians delivered up their artillery and public arms, agreed to retire peaceably to their homes, and to aid and assist in tranquilizing the country. On the part of Lieutenant-colonel Fremont it was agreed that life and property should be guaranteed, that no Mexican citizen should be bound to take the oath of allegiance until the conclusion of a treaty of peace between Mexico and the United States, and equal rights and privileges were vouchsafed to every citizen of California as enjoyed by citizens of the United States of North America. The convention, of which the above were the prin-

* Fremont's Defense. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 378, 379.

cial features, was entered into on the 13th of January, and signed and approved by Fremont, in his character of military commandant of California under Stockton's commission, on the 16th, at Ciudad de los Angeles.*

Agreed upon as it had been without any express authority on his part, Stockton nevertheless approved of it, and it doubtless had great effect in securing the tranquillity of the country. But about this period a difficulty arose about the exercise of the chief authority in the new territory, which was the cause of much subsequent annoyance.

Stockton had offered the management of affairs to Kearney soon after his arrival at San Diego, which Kearney had at the time refused. During the stay at that place, however, he had reconsidered the matter, and expressed to Stockton the opinion that he ought to be the governor of California, which Stockton then declined to permit. Kearney, by Stockton's permission, commanded the troops on the expedition to the Ciudad de los Angeles, and during that expedition the question of rank or command was raised by neither. But, after the occupation of the town, the capitulation of Cowenga, and the arrival of Fremont at Ciudad de los Angeles, Stockton commenced preparations for organizing a civil government, which he conceived he had done in the previous month of August.

This duty Kearney claimed to have been devolv-

* Executive Document, No. 1, House of Representatives, second Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1067.

ed upon him by the President of the United States, and on the 16th of January he made a formal demand upon Stockton to "*cease all further proceedings relating to the formation of a civil government* in the country.*"

Stockton replied on the same day, and refused to comply, and, in the mean time, suspended Kearney from the command of the force then in Ciudad de los Angeles, with the exception of the dragoons. Kearney replied on the 17th, and stated that, for the purpose of preventing a collision, he would remain silent for the time, but that the responsibility of doing that for which he had no authority, and for preventing the execution of the President's orders, must remain with Stockton. And, in a note of the same date, he informed the commodore of his purpose to leave Ciudad de los Angeles, with the escort which had accompanied him into the country, on the following morning.

Prior to this, however, he had addressed Lieutenant-colonel Fremont without reference to the commodore, and on the 16th had sent to that officer certain instructions and orders concerning the organization of the California battalion. Fremont, although he had reported to Kearney as commanding the forces upon his arrival, finding the question thus thrust upon him, decided to continue his obedience to Stockton until the question of command between the two was decided.

* Fremont's Trial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 90, 118, 195.

On the 16th Stockton issued his commission to Fremont as governor and commander-in-chief over California, and soon after left Ciudad de los Angeles.* Fremont at once entered upon the exercise of the duties, and, contrary to the orders of General Kearney, soon after issued orders for the increase of the battalion of volunteers under his command. He apparently considered himself supreme in the territory, and decided questions of civil, military, and fiscal matters upon his own responsibility, without reference to either military or naval officers of superior rank.

On the 20th of January Lieutenant-colonel Cooke arrived at San Diego with the Mormon battalion, raised in Missouri after Kearney's departure, which had followed him from Santa Fé by another and more favorable route. Leaving him in command, Kearney sailed from that place on the 31st. He arrived at Monterey on the 8th of February, where he found the store-ship Lexington with a company of United States artillery on board, under Captain Tompkins, and Commodore Shubrick, who had arrived in the Independence razee to take command of the squadron.

Upon exhibiting his instructions from the War Department of June 3d, Kearney was recognized as the commander of the military forces in California by the commodore, but in relation to affairs of a civil nature Shubrick had instructions of a later date.

* Fremont's Trial. Executive Document, No. 33, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 176.

In this regard, the Secretary of the Navy had written on the 12th of July to Commodore Sloat, supposed to be in command, to the effect that he was expected to take possession of California. "This," it was said, "will bring with it the necessity of a civil administration." "*Such a government should be established under your* protection,* and, in selecting persons to hold offices," &c., &c.

Shubrick had received the letter containing the above extract by the Lexington at Valparaiso on the 2d of December, and, in view of its explicit instructions, Kearney acquiesced in the civil authority of the naval commander. On the 13th of February, Colonel Mason, of the first dragoons, who had been sent from the United States subsequent to the departure of Stevenson's regiment of New-York volunteers, to take command of the land forces, and to exercise the functions of civil governor, in case of Kearney's departure, arrived at the Bay of San Francisco, where Kearney then was engaged in selecting sites for fortifications and other military reconnaissance.

Mason bore communications from both the war and navy departments to the commanders of the different branches of the service. To Commodore Stockton, Mr. Mason, Secretary of the Navy, had written on the 5th of November, ordering him to relinquish all control over civil matters in the following language :

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 238.

“The President has deemed it best for the public interests to invest the military officer commanding with the direction of the operations on land, and with the administrative functions of government over the people and territory occupied by us. You will relinquish to Colonel Mason, or to General Kearney, if the latter shall arrive before you have done so, the entire control over these matters, and turn over to him all papers necessary to the performance of his duties.”*

Kearney, after receiving the communications and informations borne by Mason, returned to Monterey and consulted with Shubrick. On the 1st of March they issued a joint circular proclamation, setting forth the intentions of the United States government, and the different duties which devolved upon the naval and military commanders, according to their latest instructions, and Kearney at once assumed the title and duties of governor of the territory.

Prior to this, Fremont had opened a correspondence with Shubrick; but, soon after receiving his instructions, the commodore informed him that he considered Kearney in command of the troops, and in the exercise of the civil authority, by order of the President.

On the 1st of March Captain Turner was dispatched to Los Angeles with a copy of the joint proclamation, and orders for Lieutenant-colonel

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 247.

Fremont. By the orders he was directed to muster his battalion into service under existing laws, and to turn over the command of the southern military district to Lieutenant-colonel Cooke, and to conduct such men of the battalion as would not engage in service under the law to Yerba Buena, by Monterey, where they would be discharged.

Fremont, however, refused to turn over the command to Cooke, ordered the second in command of the battalion to hold his position, to obey no orders which did not emanate from him; and soon after started express for Monterey. The reason alleged for the disobedience of orders was the apprehended danger of an insurrection among the Californians, incited by the vicinity of the Mormons, of whose barbarity they had received many accounts.

On the 25th of March Fremont arrived at Monterey, and had an interview with Kearney. Commodore Biddle had meantime arrived in the Columbus seventy-four, and, like Shubrick, had acknowledged the authority of the general. Fremont's interview was not satisfactory to either party: Kearney did not communicate to him the last instructions which had been received from Washington, but insisted, before having any conversation with him, upon obedience to his orders of March 1st. Fremont offered to resign his commission and return to the United States. Kearney refused it; and, finally, Fremont promised obedience, and returned to Los Angeles. Soon after his departure

Colonel Mason was sent thither, charged with the direction of affairs in the southern district.

An altercation took place between him and Fremont, which resulted in a challenge, accepted by Mason, and subsequently postponed by him. He returned to Monterey, and orders from Kearney put a stop to the intended duel. The general proceeded south to Los Angeles, where he found Fremont, who was relieved from duty, and prepared to join his regiment (mounted rifles) in Mexico by proceeding overland to the Vera Cruz route.*

By the time he arrived at Monterey, however, he was directed to accompany Kearney to the United States; for, during the interval, a portion of Stevenson's regiment of New York volunteers had arrived, and Kearney turned over the direction of affairs in the country to Mason.

California was in a manner quiet, and a force then present and at hand which was quite sufficient to maintain the supremacy of the United States.

The controversy between the principal agents in effecting the occupation of the territory of California attracted much attention, and is well known to the people of the United States. The facts of the case on either side have been developed in the trial of Lieutenant-colonel Fremont, and in the speech of Senator Benton against the confirmation of General Kearney's brevet appointment.

The difficulties were the natural consequence

* Testimony before the Court Martial, and Colonel Benton's Speech.

of the irregular, and, in a measure, unauthorized course of action on the part of Stockton and Fremont, and the nature of the service performed. This action proved to be for the same end which was desired by the President of the United States, but undoubtedly was undertaken as much for personal aggrandizement and distinction as for any well-defined intention of carrying out the wishes of the authorities at Washington. This never-failing source of personal enmity caused the controversy between Stockton and Kearney; and in a stickling for prerogative which he had no right to assume, and which he was immediately to relinquish, Stockton was the originator of serious difficulty. The consequences of the difficulty fell upon Fremont; and although there is no question of the illegality of his disobedience to the officer of the army in favor of one who had no legal right to command him, yet he certainly was in a delicate position when appealed to by two officials, one his superior in army rank, and who had yielded a tacit obedience to the other, and that other the officer under whose authority Fremont had voluntarily raised his battalion and served up to the time.

How far he was justified by circumstances in continuing his disobedience was the question, and that question was decided against Fremont by a court martial. He was found guilty of "mutiny," "disobedience of orders," and of "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline," and sentenced to be dismissed the service.

The President remitted the sentence in consideration of his previous valuable and meritorious services, but Fremont refused to acquiesce in the decision of the court by accepting the executive clemency, and resigned his commission.

The early action in California which brought about the nondescript partisan war, though successful in effecting the occupation of the country, had many other evil effects than that of causing the difficulty between the officers, aspirants for military or civic honors. A great waste of public property, and the contraction of an infinite number of debts, which could not be legally settled, and which are not settled to this day, were among them. The civil government established was a nonentity, and the various mockeries of administrations, for they were but little else, of Stockton, Fremont, and Kearney, had effect hardly outside of cannon range. A species of military superintendence was the consequence, which was all the government which existed in California to the close of the war, except the remnant of the old Mexican organization.

CHAPTER XIII.

Politics in the United States—Avowed Policy and Recommendations of the Administration at the Opening of the second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress—Action of Congress—Attempt to create a Lieutenant General—Provisions made by the twenty-ninth Congress for the Prosecution of the War—Politics in Mexico—Polka Rebellion—Return of Santa Anna to the Capital—Reorganization of the Army.

THE flood of enthusiasm which had been raised in the United States by the occurrence of hostilities, and which, for a time, seemed to have set the whole current of public opinion in favor of their vigorous prosecution, soon found vent through the usual channels of political controversy. The exigencies of the case in the state of affairs upon the Rio Grande, as understood at Washington, at first silenced the opposition party in the American Congress, and drove its members, almost without exception, to acquiesce in the vote by which the state of war was officially recognized, and the immediate provision made for its support. But when the crisis was past, and the danger of implicating the party in a positive declaration against the measures of defense was over, there was time for rest and reflection. To the people of the United States the war did not appeal directly; for the scene of operations was distant, the taxes were indirect, and the war was commenced with an overflowing treasury. In the interval of active operations, and the

consequent dearth of news, the conduct of the government was closely criticised. The opposition party, repenting of the vote by which its members had become implicated in the measure, took the ground that the war was unjust, and returned to its former position, that the conduct of the President and his advisers, in the public transactions which preceded it, was reprehensible. Warring against the administration from these bases, its prominent men, regardless of the effect upon the enemy and the interest of their own country, lost but few opportunities of publishing the principles of action. The increased expenditure of money was freely commented upon, and economy, the usual cry of those anxious to get the management of a public treasury for their own benefit, was set forth as an argument against maintaining the national honor. The national interest was made to appear incompatible with the war, and the policy of the administration, so far as known, was bitterly denounced. What was not known did not escape criticism before the fact; for the various newspaper editors, anxious for articles on the interesting subject, put forth their speculations on policy and plans of operations, of which few knew any thing, and a less number understood. The Whig and neutral presses, during the interval of action in Mexico, were especially noisy in condemning the administration, and the abolition prints in the North came out in bold denunciation. Had all these succeeded in bewildering the Mexican government as completely as they

did themselves, they might have done the state some service. But the Mexican functionaries were nearer the scene of action, and had better sources of information than their editorial allies; and, while they took the speculations for what they were worth, eagerly seized upon the demonstration of domestic hostility to the American government, and drew thence inferences favorable to themselves.

The Democratic presses, meanwhile, strove to keep up the war excitement, and to bring the people to the support of the administration by appeals to patriotism. But they had no capital of late successful military action. Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and the bombardment of Fort Brown had lasted for a few months—long enough to fill up the first call for volunteers with surprising rapidity. By that time every real incident had been narrated, besides an infinite number which never occurred, and the unsatisfied public turned anxiously for excitement to politics.

The elections for members of Congress occurred, for the most part, before the receipt of the news of the battle of Monterey, and the dilatory action of the government, the enormous expenditure of money, the injustice of the cause, the encouragement given to slave-holders, and various other topics, were urged by the opposition candidates, who, in the absence of military news, managed to secure a majority in the House of Representatives of the thirtieth Congress.

Notwithstanding this effect of the opposition to

the war, the avowed policy of the administration underwent no change. The message of President Polk to the twenty-ninth Congress, at the opening of the second session, set forth that "the war will continue to be prosecuted with vigor, as the best means of securing peace. It is hoped that the decision of the Mexican Congress, to which our last overture was referred, may result in a speedy and honorable peace. With our experience, however, of the unreasonable course of the Mexican authorities, it is the part of wisdom not to relax in the energy of our military operations until the result is made known. In this view, it is deemed important to hold military possession of all the provinces which have been taken, until a definite treaty of peace shall have been concluded and ratified by the two countries."

The policy in reference to holding the territory of Mexico as indemnity, though not explicitly avowed, was treated of.

"The war has not been waged with a view to conquest; but, having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country, and will be vigorously prosecuted there, with a view to obtain an honorable peace, and thereby secure ample indemnity for the expenses of the war, as well as to our much-injured citizens, who hold large pecuniary demands against Mexico."*

For the different recommendations of action to

* Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 22.

furnish requisite means for the vigorous prosecution of hostilities, reference was made to the reports of the secretaries.

The principal one, in the report of Mr. Marcy, was that of authorizing an increase of the regular army. The various embarrassments and inconveniences resulting from the employment of volunteer troops had been experienced, and the administration had become aware of its error in calling upon them to serve for only one year; for, by the time that the organization had been completed, and the most serious embarrassments had been overcome in reference to the troops originally called out, the term of service had half expired. The obstinacy of Mexico was not half subdued, and the result of the operations then in course of preparation, and how far they were to be carried before the enemy would sue for or agree to negotiations, remained to be seen. The error was not again committed, and those volunteers which were called forth in the fall of the year 1846 were to serve during the war. Still, Mr. Marcy recommended the employment of regulars rather than volunteers; for, while the bravery of the volunteers was acknowledged, he wrote, "It is no disparagement to them to say that a regular force is to be preferred in a war to be prosecuted in a foreign country. Besides, considerations of economy are decidedly in favor of troops engaged to serve during the war. I am most solicitous that this subject should receive the early attention of Congress, and a body

of troops to serve for the war may be raised to take the place of those volunteers who will claim a discharge at the end of their year's service."* He therefore recommended that ten additional regiments for the regular army should be raised.

It was further recommended to Congress to make provision for the retirement of aged and infirm officers of the army, to appoint an additional major to each regiment, and to make some few additions to the staff corps; the two first of which were of crying necessity, as a glance at the condition of the army for a long previous period sufficed to show.

Another provision which was requisite, and which, in despite of recommendations, Congress had failed to act upon, was again urged upon them—that of granting authority to courts martial sitting in foreign countries to take cognizance of crimes of a civil nature committed by any persons, whether enlisted men of the army or not, which, under the existing American Articles of War, they had no power to do.

The methods recommended for providing for the deficiency in the revenue to meet the expenses of the government were by loan, the graduation and reduction of the price of public lands which had been long in market, and the imposition of a war revenue upon articles of import on the free list of the American tariff.

* Executive Document, No. 4, House of Representatives, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress, p. 54.

To enable the President to proceed immediately with negotiations, should opportunity occur, soon after the commencement of hostilities during the previous session he had asked for an appropriation of three millions of dollars, which application was renewed in his message.

The various subjects were soon taken up and discussed in the different houses of the American Congress; but, although the administration party was in the majority in both branches at the time, the opposition was strong enough to delay action, in the view which was taken of the particular benefit which each party might derive in the course of the legislation. Looking to their own interest, and in fear lest the Democratic party should gain popularity, the Whigs took good care to debate every proposition as it came up, although they were of obvious propriety, and had been urged upon the attention of Congress as of immediate necessity, as they indeed were; for, in keeping with the previous policy of the government, no more troops were called for than were deemed absolutely necessary for present purposes, leaving but a small margin for contingencies. While action upon the recommendations was delayed, and the different bills introduced were slowly passing the ordeal of legislative criticism, other propositions were brought before Congress.

When the session opened, if there were any definite plan of operations having the great end of the war in view, it had not been agreed upon be-

tween the administration and either of the generals then in command in the field. As matters then stood, the military operations were in progress in some way, but neither of the commanders possessed the confidence of the President, or was fully aware of his wishes or intentions. General Taylor's plan, which, after his experiment at Monterey, he had given as his view of proper future action, had been received, but was not approved. General Scott was organizing the expedition against Vera Cruz, with a view, as he said, of marching thence upon the city of Mexico;* and it was undoubtedly the intention of the President that the march should be made, if peace were not accepted by the enemy; but it nowhere appears that General Scott was assigned, at that time, to any thing else than the command of the particular expedition. It may very naturally have been a matter of inference, on his part, that he was to continue in the command. Whether he were or not, it would not have been good policy on the part of the administration to excite his suspicion or ill temper, when he was about entering upon his duties, by informing him that he was not; and it does not appear that, at the time of leaving Washington, he had any knowledge of an intention to supersede him. His inferences and the recommendations of the President were entirely antagonistic, and the charge of bad faith, in permitting him to depart

* General Scott to General Taylor. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 839.

under the impression that he was to continue in command, might with justice have been brought against Mr. Polk, had it not been for the previous conduct of the general-in-chief; but, in view of his early correspondence and course of conduct, his extreme anxiety at the time for employment in the active duties of his station, and his complete dependence upon Mr. Polk for any assignment of the kind, it may well be a question how far the latter was called upon to sacrifice his policy or his wishes to benefit a man who was notoriously hostile to his administration, and who, it was believed, on former occasions had returned the honor offered to him first by coolness, and then by positive insult. He did assign him to the command of the expedition against Vera Cruz, but the main question of the operations to be pushed to the conquest of a peace was in great measure undetermined. Whether General Scott had been asked for, or had given his opinion on the subject in extenso, does not appear in official correspondence which has been published; but in neither the projet of instructions which he submitted to the Secretary of War for his signature, nor in the memoranda on Vera Cruz and its castle, nor in the instructions which were actually written out by Mr. Marcy, does it positively appear that he was ordered to execute any other duty than that of taking the fortress of San Juan d'Ulloa and the city of Vera Cruz.*

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1276, 1268-1272, and 836.

The great question of the method of obtaining a peace from the enemy, when viewed in connection with those of home policy, was one of exceeding difficulty. Had the United States been a monarchy, and, as they are, the most powerful nation on the continent, it would have been of easy solution. It would have at once been attempted to force Mexico to the alternative of suing for peace or of losing her nationality, without the sacrifice of etiquette, moral advantages, or national pride in making the different offers of negotiation which were made. But in the United States, neither government nor people were prepared for such a course of action. Various interests, prejudices, and sympathies were opposed to it; and while it was wished to force Mexico to terms and to obtain indemnity, it was desirable to leave her in an independent and prosperous condition.

The first great thing to be done was to make the governing power in Mexico sensible of these desired ends, and the consequences which must follow if they could not be accomplished—a task of some magnitude; for, while so great a diversity of opinion existed at home, and so many discussions as to the policy, avowed and secret, of the administration were being published in the American prints, it could be no very easy matter to convince the Mexicans that any thing like a spirit of good feeling existed on the part of the government of the United States. It can hardly be believed that there did, except so far as was advised by in-

terest; and when the administration was forced by the outcries of the opposition to make the very many concessions to the enemy, it was forced to commit an error in diplomatic action. The peace which the United States had the right and power to demand, was begged. "*In politics, it is a grievous fault to be too generous; gratitude in state affairs is unknown, and as the appearance of disinterested kindness never deceives, it should never be assumed.*"* The appearance of kindness in the various offers which had been made, although, for reasons of interest, they would have been carried out in good faith, certainly had no effect to induce Mexico to accept them. On the contrary, after each one, she had been as, if not more, obstinate than before, and indulged the hope that, as the United States were so desirous for peace, they would soon give up the war of their own accord.

The second which was considered necessary was to present an imposing force, to threaten while the future friendly propositions were made, and to inflict the evils of war, step by step, until the terms were acceded to—a military task, but containing, in combination with the first, many elements of difficulty; and they were increased when it was proposed to make the burden of the war fall upon Mexico by raising military contributions.

To combine all these in harmonious action required a plan, and one which had in it more talent than is usually found in even those which have

* Napier, chapter i., book ii., vol. i., Carey & Hart's edition, 1842, p. 79.

been successfully executed. A plan was proposed by Mr. Benton, chairman of the Military Committee of the Senate, and met the approbation of the President. What its details were, or whether it was practicable, can not be told, for it has not seen the light, and, moreover, would lack the great test of experience. But it was not in keeping with the ideas of either Generals Taylor or Scott, and as the President did not wish to take the responsibility of removing them, or of intrusting them with the execution of the plan, a proposition was placed before Congress to the effect that a new grade should be created in the army, for the period of the war, senior to any known in the American service. If created, it was to have been filled by the appointment of Mr. Benton.*

In this proposition the opposition members saw the attempt to appoint the succeeding president;† for both of the commanding generals then in the field were upon their side of politics; and while they denounced the war as unjust, they praised its military achievements, attributed great talent to the generals, and claimed all the credit of successful management for their own. A rival on the other side of superior rank, and, if of talent and with good fortune, of superior success, for he would bring the war to a glorious termination, was greatly to be feared. The proposition was therefore virulent.

* Colonel Benton's Speech on the Lieutenant Generalship. Appendix to Congressional Globe, second Session of the twenty-ninth Congress.

† Mr. Mangum's Speech on the Lieutenant Generalship. Idem.

ly opposed, and all the arguments which could be urged against it were urged. Among others, it was loudly proclaimed that it was a slight and an insult to the regular army, which had done so much for the honor of the country—an argument of some reason, and proper enough, had it not been that the fixed policy of the country, and the action of both parties, had been a continual slight, not to say insult. Brought in, as it was at the time, to oppose the administration and save the general-in-chief, who was wanted as a presidential candidate, the “appearance of disinterested kindness” could hardly deceive any into the belief that the Whig party was more particularly patriotic or grateful to the army than the Democratic.

The proposition to create a lieutenant general was rejected, and, as it was, had a pernicious tendency, instead of simplifying the operations and insuring a good understanding between the executive and the commanding generals. It had the effect of souring the feelings of General Scott, who, by the failure of the attempt, was left in command, and of diverting his attention from the operations of war to politics and personal position, which already occupied quite a sufficient share of his thoughts. In his own words, he was forced to attend “to the fire in his rear from Washington.”

A second attempt was made to obtain the same end by ingrafting a provision to a bill for the increase of the number of general officers of the army, that the President should be authorized to place

any one of them, without regard to rank, in command of the army in Mexico. But this met with the same opposition, and was likewise defeated.

The discussion of bills for the increase of the army and for provisions for the war was protracted until near the close of the session. The opportunity was seized in this connection, by persons desirous of sectional popularity, to ingraft on some of these bills a proviso affecting the abstract, though dangerous question of slavery. It was fixed upon that which made the appropriation of three millions for negotiating purposes. The proviso, known as Mr. Wilmot's, made much excitement in the North and South, and the continued and fiery discussions between the members of Congress from the different sections were another element of delay.

But, finally, bills were passed providing the money required, authorizing the President to raise ten additional regiments for the regular army, and to appoint an additional number of general and staff officers; but he was denied the authority of Congress to select the general to be intrusted with the command of the army and the prosecution of the war, irrespective of the rank of those already in the field.

The effect of the delay in legislative action will be apparent in a future chapter. But, in the mean time, and while the preparations for inflicting another blow with the sword were in progress, the olive branch was again thrust at Mexico. Mr. Buchanan wrote on the 18th of January, 1847, to

the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, offering peace, and proposing that commissioners should be appointed, to meet at Havana or at Jalapa, to negotiate a treaty. The letter reached Mexico just on the eve of a revolution, and the government of Mexico, whose minister answered it, was powerless in any event. The answer, so far as it went, was but a repetition of former answers to similar offers, that Mexico would on no account appoint commissioners without the previous acceptance of the preliminary condition, that the American troops should evacuate the Mexican territory, and that the blockade of Mexican ports should be raised.*

While political controversy delayed the action of the American government in furnishing the necessary support to the war, by causing legislative discussions, in Mexico it produced more direct opposition to the measures of the administration of Farias. The news of the contemplated attack upon Vera Cruz and the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa produced new exertions to raise money, the immediate want of Mexico in carrying on the war. As it was believed that the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa was of great importance to the defense of the country, the vice-president, and those of his cabinet who remained, pressed the negotiations for the sale of the Church property on more ruinous

* Correspondence. Executive Document, No. 1, Senate, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 36-38.

terms than ever. In the exigencies of the moment the Congress gave its assent to the sales, and upon this the opposition, which had subsided during the inability of the government to effect a sale, broke out again.

The priests used all their influence with the populace, families, and even the women, to foment discord and create a revolt. Their efforts soon had effect in the city of Mexico among the better class of inhabitants, and loud denunciations of the policy of the government were daily put forth. The battalions of Victoria, Bravo, and Hidalgo, of the National Guard, were principally composed of men of that class, and were in consequence, and because of their opposition to the government, special objects of the enmity of Farias and the Puros. The first step to be taken was either to get rid of them or to render them harmless. Those battalions were therefore ordered to march to Vera Cruz—officers and men at once refused to obey; then to deliver up their arms and accouterments, that they might be sent to the threatened point, and obedience to this order was likewise refused.

Upon the demonstration of an intention on the part of the government to employ certain battalions of the regular army which had been retained in the city to enforce the latter order, a pronunciamiento was issued, and preparations made for supporting it in arms. The citadel was seized and held by the *Polkas*, for so the insurgents called themselves, and a choice was made of a leader.

General Peña y Barragan was spoken of, but he was absent from the city, at his country house at Mixcoac, and did not at first countenance the use of his name. Upon learning the selection, Farias sent an escort of cavalry to arrest and bring him to the palace ; but it arrived while he was absent from home. Having learned of the intention of the government, without returning to his house, he repaired at once to the city, and placed himself at the head of the rebellion.

Having seized and garrisoned several convents in the most thickly-populated quarters of the capital, Peña y Barragan issued a proclamation against the government of Farias, in which he declared all contracts made for the sale of Church property null and void, and all commissions conferred by the existing authorities to be of no effect. He acknowledged Santa Anna as President of Mexico, although the acknowledgment was in contradiction to the original plan of the Polkas, which was based upon the asserted illegality of the last election of public officers.

When taken together, the publications of the insurgents were ridiculous, and the inconsistency of the different objects of the movement was well expressed by the name given to the revolt in the capital, "*El pronunciamiento de las mugeres.*"

The government party occupied the palace and the Grand Plaza, to which the principal approaches were strongly barricaded. The Polkas remained in their convents, and the contest of the factions

was principally at long range. Several advances were made by the government troops on the convent of La Profesa, the head-quarters of the insurgents; but they always retired without serious loss, and without having inflicted any. The principal damage done by either of the parties was upon a few old market-women and citizens, who traversed the streets in pursuit of business, and were sometimes overtaken by a random shot. But in the state of turmoil which existed, a third party appeared indirectly in the contest, in the shape of the robber bands which usually infested the high roads. These, taking advantage of the suspension of the police government, flocked into the city in great numbers, and, by their plundering, did as much damage as either Puros or Polkas.

That all this disturbance, and the ridiculous mimicry of a civil war, should be going on in the capital while the main army was engaged in fighting the enemy, and when a serious attack by a new and dangerous line of operations was anticipated, affords a sufficient commentary upon the waywardness of the Mexican people, and makes it a matter of wonder that, out of such material, any man, however great his genius, could have collected and controlled any formidable means of defense.

The news of the outbreak reached Santa Anna while on his retreat from La Angostura. In his report of the battle, he had made the best possible account of the operations, and claimed that he had gained the victory, which, however, he admitted,

was not complete. In proof of his claim, he enumerated the partial success of his attacks, and the trophies of guns and colors captured in the conflict. But the main feature which was apparent in the document was the statement of the difficulties which he had encountered, and the blame of which he laid at the door of the government. These were asserted to be the cause of the indecisive nature of the so-called victory, and the government and people were strongly urged to rally in support of the war.

Whatever may have been Santa Anna's policy before the battle of La Angostura, it was now necessary for his own safety that he should assert that he had gained a victory, and proclaim louder than ever his warlike intentions. He needed all the personal popularity of which he was possessed to quell the revolution in the capital, and that was hardly to be increased by an acknowledgment of disaster on his part, especially when some of his generals were accusing him of incapacity. His various bulletins preceded him in his retreat, and caused the belief that he had gained a victory honorable alike to himself and his country. Under this impression, he was received, as he passed through different cities, with every demonstration of joy and congratulation.

Upon reaching San Luis, he wrote to the chiefs of factions in the capital, recommending a cessation of hostilities until his arrival. On the 14th of March he issued a proclamation, announcing his

departure to assume the reins of government, in order to put a stop to the civil war which then existed, and to concentrate the whole energy of the nation upon the prosecution of hostilities against the Americans.*

Two brigades of infantry, one of cavalry, and the accompanying artillery, were ordered to march for Vera Cruz upon their arrival at San Luis, which place was to be garrisoned by the remaining troops of the army as they came up. Santa Anna soon after proceeded to the capital.

Upon his arrival he negotiated with the insurgents, and succeeded in quieting the rebellion, but not until Farias had been sacrificed and expelled the capital, and the sale of Church property, as a measure of the policy of the government, had been abandoned.

Having accomplished this, Santa Anna set himself about reorganizing an army, to make another attempt at stemming the tide of invasion. And, truly, it was a work of magnitude. The want of money still existed, the jealousies of the parties in the late disturbances were only half allayed, many of the states of the confederacy were dissatisfied, and some even manifested an intention of declaring independence of the central government. Agitators of all parties were at work, as usual, fomenting discords on any pretexts, regardless of the state of the country; and while all professed hostility to

* Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1126.

the invaders, most opposed any means which might be taken to organize a defense. To all of these were added the demoralizing effect of three great defeats, not counterbalanced by the factitious semblance of a victory, which, in despite of proclamations and rejoicings, began to take its legitimate place in the opinion of even Mexicans. These were a few of the difficulties presented to Santa Anna, and they can only be appreciated by those acquainted with Mexican character.

The Congress had, however, hailed his return with high-sounding declarations of patriotism, and professions of immediate and energetic action under his government. Its active course was productive of no more than had been previously accomplished. Every thing for the support of the war was left to be provided by the genius and energy of Santa Anna, while the miserable political intrigues progressed among the members of the legislative body.

Santa Anna wished soon to absent himself from the capital, to take command of the army in the field; but, at first, that was legally impossible, without leaving the executive power again in the hands of Farias—an event which would have at once aroused the Polkas, and, in the mean time, that party had acquired the ascendancy in the Congress. Santa Anna professed that he would consent to none but legal measures, and it was for some time doubtful how the matter could be arranged. At length the fertile inventive genius of the Mexican

legislators hit upon the expedient of abolishing the office of vice-president, and with it the incumbent, Farias. To replace him, and to provide for the exercise of the executive power during Santa Anna's absence, it was decreed that a "*president substitute*" should be appointed by the Congress, and the choice fell upon General Don Pedro Anaya, who assumed power, and Santa Anna was at liberty to join the army.

On the 31st of March he issued a proclamation announcing the fall of Vera Cruz, and the probable advance of the American army upon the capital. The disaster was attributed to the fatal discords which had existed, and Mexicans were urged to wipe out the disgrace by renewed and harmonious action.

Although open strife had ceased, the various cabals and intrigues were still objects of Santa Anna's attention, and, before his departure, he took good care to arrange schemes by which they were to be kept in check, for the election of a president was soon to take place.* But, having made his arrangements, on the 2d of April he left the capital, to join the army in the vicinity of Vera Cruz.

* J. P. de Mora to Santa Anna. Executive Document, No. 60, House of Representatives, first Session of the thirtieth Congress, p. 1087.



APPENDIX TO VOL. I.

CORRESPONDENCE OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH GENERAL
ALMONTE.

No. 1.

“ To Gen. Almonte.

“ New-York, Feby. 19th, 1847.

“ DEAR SIR,—On the receipt of this letter, you will be informed that yours of the 28th of Novr. was duly received by me, and I am very much obliged to you for the kind and expressive manner with which you write it to me. Although I am not a Mexican by birth, yet in *feelings* I am a Mexican, and as such, with your kind invitation, I will write to you from time to time, and I hope that the interchange of our views will be as agreeable to you as it will be pleasing to me. The communication which you promise to transmit to me ‘ through some friend,’ I will wait for it with the greatest anxiety, hoping that it will enable us to make a countermove in this country, while the energy of the government will be employed in Mexico. I have carefully examined the subject that I submitted to you in my last letter, and beg leave to say that my views have not been changed by time ; and I assure you, sir, that I am ready to confront our enemy as soon as I hear from you, and the necessary arrangement can be made for that purpose. My dear Gen., I hope that you will be able to see that the plan can be arranged without communicating its contents to more than two or three persons, and the vigorous manner with which I design to prosecute it would enable me to paralyze the energy of the government on the outset of the operation. The most of the troops of the line are in Mexico, or soon will be, and the arms that I designed to use would enable me to cope successfully with any irregular troops that could be brought against me. But whether I succeed in obtaining the means necessary to enable me to take a part in the contest or not, I hope the result of the war will be advantageous to the Mexican arms. The subject that

is paramount with me is to see a union, a union among the people and the people's leaders, which will enable you to present a solid front to the enemy of your country. I feel some solicitude about the financial affairs of the country, and I hope that you may succeed in adopting some plan that will prove equal to the exigency of the war. I am convinced, however, that you will be obliged to issue bills of the denomination of \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100, for the use of the army and for the general purposes of the government. If the annual expenses is greater than the income, you must be able to make up the deficiency ; and if you fail in doing so, it will prove disastrous to the army. The emission of paper money, we are told that it originated with the Spanish army in Spain, and I think that if you refer to war in Europe with Napoleon, you will see that England depended mainly upon the Bank of England, which for thirty years did not pay any specie, and I hope that it will be possible for your government to issue paper that would be received as a currency of the country in all the departments in Mexico. If each department would guarantee the redemption of a certain amount in so many years, and the clergy would assume a part of the amount, and if the government would receive the same for dues, I think you would be able to issue about \$25,000,000 every year for three or four years. But, if I should be able to take the field, the war would not last four years between Mexico and the United States. To enable you to meet your engagements for the purchase of military stores, &c., if the amount contributed by the clergy and the departments should be in part gold and silver, I think that you would be enabled to manage your financial affair with more facility than you ever will be able to do under the present system. Your annual income must be equal to your annual expenses, and if not, you must provide for the deficiency ; and how will you do it, unless you could obtain money upon the credit of the government ? The idea of the respective states in Mexico paying a sufficient sum, or the church, as a mode to furnish the government with the means for conducting the war, will, in my opinion, fail, unless it could be done in such a way as to make it work with harmony. If the churches would pay over to the government the annual income over their expenses, and

charge 5 or 6 per cent. for the use of it, and would consolidate the interest with the lone during the war, I think it would add much to the vigor of the nation in conducting the war against her enemy. I would like to finish these views upon this financial question, but I must forbear unless desired by you. I hope, sir, you will appreciate my motive for adverting to this subject, and attribute it only to my anxiety for you as the financial agent of your country, and for her prosperity. I will expect to hear from you soon, and, in the mean time, you will hear from me again. I am, dear, your obd't serv't, and a devoted friend of your country,
 (Signed), "LEWIS H. PUTNAM."

No. 2.

"No. 1.

"Decr. 21, 1846.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"The false, partial, exaggerated, and inflammatory statements in Polk's Message, of supposed or pretended wrongs done by Mexico to the United States, is producing its effect upon the ignorant and superficial, even among Whigs and opponents of the war. We may be able, in some measure, to do away this impression, by giving the facts as to our claims, and details of the wrongs and insults which Mexico can array as an *offset*; but you are aware that it takes a long time for truth told by a private citizen to overtake falsehood flying on the four winds from the President's lips. Now it does appear to me that a *counter document*, issued with equal solemnity, and from an equally conspicuous source in Mexico, is demanded. Permit me to suggest some points as proper to be treated of.

"1. The real nature of the pretended injuries, as being to private persons and private property, and not public wrongs or national indignities, and as being also the results of mistakes of subordinate officers in applying your laws, or the ordinary case of taking private property for public use, as in the impressment of vessels and forced loans, for which Mexico has never refused a due indemnity, nor, indeed, in any case where it should be found to be due.

"2. The wrongs and outrages committed by smuggling, and by

national vessels of the United States, involving most palpable national insults, as the elopement of vessels from your harbors when in custody of officers of the government, and the carrying off to sea, in one instance, if no more, of one of those officers. Also the capture of your public vessels by ours, merely because they were engaged in executing your revenue laws against smugglers, and endeavoring to enforce and maintain the authority of the nation in Texas and on its coasts.

“3. The outrage of Com. Jones (probably the result of *secret orders*) at Monterey. You know Jones says that he aimed to do in the new state of things (which he pretends to suppose) what the government would order were they to communicate with him. Also, the outrage committed by the *Alert* (I think the vessel was called) at San Diego; and the pre-eminent outrage (under pretexts insulting to common sense) of Gaines’s invasion of Mexican territory in 1836.

“4. The utter neglect and refusal of our government to make any satisfaction, or give any indemnity for pecuniary damage in any of these cases. They did not even bring Jones to a court of *inquiry*, a thing never before omitted in such a case, though the excuse were far more plausible than Jones’s. Why should they not have *inquired* into the matter? Jones was not within the jurisdiction of Mexico, and, in fact, none but our government could proceed against him, and elicit the facts which the two nations had a right to have spread before them. They were, in my opinion, afraid of the defense which Jones could make.

“5. The repeated attempts to obtain Texas by negotiation—under Jefferson, in 1805–6, as stated by Mr. Gorostiza; the military irruptions, with the connivance of the government, as stated by Wilkinson; the final application for a grant of a district as an *asylum for Catholics persecuted in the United States*; the perjury by which others obtained land, and their frauds thereupon; the pertinacious and insolent attempts to make Mexico the *slave catcher* of the United States; the audacious threat (repeatedly used for obtaining such a stipulation) that the American slave-holders would come and take them by force, and the government demand an indemnity for them! the attempts of Poinsett to get Texas, his inter-

ference for that purpose in the domestic dissensions of Mexico, and his agency in setting up a military usurper, giving thereby the first example of disorder and anarchy; the conduct of Butler, his successor; the infamous pretensions brought forward to a boundary at the Nueces as the Sabine, and then of a Sabine emptying itself into the Rio Grande; the insolent demands and dirty intrigues of that fellow under the private instructions of the President of the United States, and his final attempt to bribe to the amount of half a million to obtain the cession of Texas. Mr. Adams saw in the department of state Butler's letter, in which he proposed direct bribery and asked for the money, and the instructions of the President indorsed on the letter to this effect, viz., that this government would have nothing to do with designating persons to whom money should be paid, but that if half a million more were required to effect the purchase, the money should be ready, and be added to the five millions previously offered. You know that Forsyth, in an official letter, while he affects to disapprove in the name of the President of Butler's proposed means, nevertheless tells him that the President is willing that he should *try*. There must be men in the city of Mexico who know whether Butler *did* try.

"6. The whole affair of the conspiracy disclosed by Mayo, and other evidence, doubtless, in possession of your government. Butler's 'precious collection' may be bought cheap, if you want it. Many other points I might mention, such as the insulting and outrageous conduct of Americans to officers of the law, to the citizens, government, and judicial tribunals, all in the overbearing and insolent spirit caught from their government.

"God bless you, my friend, and your righteous cause. It is time that the people of Mexico and the friends of justice every where were cheered by some hard and vengeful blow. Now is the time (when our troops are bloated with an overweening confidence of their invincibleness and contempt for their enemies) to strike a terrible blow. Such a blow would bring a storm of indignation about Polk's ears which would make him quail. You know what the elections already indicate; but let me tell you candidly, unless your countrymen fight longer and harder—unless the tide of success is turned, or, at least, checked—millions of souls here who

would be loud against the slavemongers and murderers will settle down into resignation to what will seem to them *destiny*! In the name of the God of justice, in the name of liberty and humanity, let Santa Anna *strike*. Don't forget, if you do make a manifesto, the confessions of Upshur and Calhoun, that annexation was to secure the existence and safety of the institution of slavery in the United States, and the declaration of the latter that it was from no hostility to Mexico, conclusive proof that at that time our government did not dream of making the claims on Mexico a pretext for war. There is an idea current among the people that the Mexicans do not know how to *take aim*. It has doubtless been derived from the correspondence of the army. If this defect exist, it must be *fatal*. An army of *Julius Cæsars* would be used up in short time, firing at random themselves and taking the fire of Americans, who universally *learn to shoot from their boyhood*. It is a tradition of the country that the troops of the United States had the advantage of the British in the war of the Revolution, because ours took aim as they would to kill game, while the British did *not take aim*, but only fired in the general direction of their adversary.

"Farewell. God bless you and your cause is the prayer of your affectionate

FRIEND.

"The fate of the admirable Mexican woman who was killed while administering succor to the wounded has excited universal sympathy. Should you write me, please *number* your letters. I have written you twice since the receipt of your Havana letter, the last I have received.

"Two more points I must barely hint at. The embezzlement of full power sent to Mr. Obregon by the hands of Poinsett and his messenger, and the charge of falsehood made against the Mexican secretary of foreign affairs on the evidence of *Greenhow*."*

* The continuation of the letter is written across the first page in the original. The postscript is written across the second page.

The original letter is directed on the back to "General Almonte, city of Mexico," and bears the postmark of Habana, an indistinct postmark of the British steam packet, and the figure 1, all in blue ink.

END OF VOL. I.













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